The Crusader Armies

STEVE TIBBLE

VISIT...

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1099–1187

STEVE TIBBLE

YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS
NEW HAVEN AND LONDON

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U.S. Office: sales.press@yale.edu yalebooks.com
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Set in Minion Pro by IDSUK (DataConnection) Ltd
Printed in Great Britain by Gomer Press Ltd, Llandysul, Ceredigion, Wales

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018931552

ISBN 978–0–300–21814–5 (hbk)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To Jacqui, Amy and Lucy

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FOREWORD

THE MIDDLE EAST is continually in the news, and a raft of shorthand assumptions make the crusades and crusading warfare seem very accessible: almost comfortably familiar. Labels such as 'crusaders', 'Islamists' and 'jihadists', however anachronistically they are used, provide a readily available explanation for the past, a plausible connection to current affairs. They give us an off-the-shelf way to view the 'clash of civilisations' which we are told is unfolding in front of us.

Yet many, maybe most, of our easy assumptions are either wrong or subtly deceptive half-truths.

This book looks at the crusades, and crusading warfare in particular, in a way which may seem surprisingly out of kilter with modern perceptions. It suggests that:

- crusading warfare was not fundamentally driven by religion, though religion would, of course, be a powerful rallying cry and a vital motivator for individuals or specific groups. It was a powerful proximate factor but not the ultimate cause;
- the key driver was, instead, the age-old conflict between nomads and sedentary societies, herders against farmers. From a Eurocentric perspective, we tend to view conflict in the region as being primarily between 'western crusaders' and 'Muslims': but, as we shall see, the local sedentary Muslim societies all suffered crushing defeats by the same nomadic invaders long before the crusaders arrived, and continued to be subjected to them long after the crusaders had gone. The fact that most of the nomadic powers were, nominally at least, Muslim, helps distract us from seeing the underlying axis of the struggle;
- these underlying conflicts between nomads and sedentary communities were propelled by two ostensibly very modern, but in reality entirely ancient, phenomena: climate change and mass migration. Climate change in the century prior to the crusades made life on the steppes increasingly difficult, and

propelled nomadic tribes towards the Middle East. The mass migration that resulted was the inevitable precursor to conflict with local settled communities, as everyone fought for control of scarce resources;

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contrary to our preconceptions, 'crusader' armies very often consisted largely of Arabs, Syrians and Armenians. Even those soldiers we think of as 'western' were in fact largely mixed-race settlers. Similarly, 'Muslim' armies often contained remarkably few Muslims;

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the practice of warfare between these extraordinarily resourceful groups of people was far more sophisticated than one might expect of medieval fighting men. Far from being simplistic or static, we find a desperate armed struggle unfolding across the entire region over the course of the twelfth century. It was the outcome of this struggle which shaped the face of the Middle East that we see today.

In the normal course of events, academic insights are slow to be absorbed into the public consciousness. There may be a time lag of years, sometimes even a decade or two, before what is generally known among scholars in a specialist field becomes widely accepted. But it eventually becomes part of the broader understanding of a subject.

This does not seem to be the case with crusading studies, despite the mass of advances in the field. The main reason for this has been the relentless media coverage of contemporary conflict in the Middle East, as it vastly outweighs the impact recent research has had on public perceptions of the subject. What academics take for granted is still largely unknown by the general public.

This book tries to look at crusading armies and the societies that depended on them from a fresh perspective, building on the new research, and highlighting some of the areas where our modern sensibilities are most at variance with current academic thinking.

In doing so I have relied shamelessly on the outstanding work carried out by crusading scholars over the past two decades, notably Ronnie Ellenblum's work on climate change, Frankish colonisation, castles and sieges; John France's many books and papers on warfare in the region; Malcolm Barber's work on the Templars and his recent history of the crusader states in the twelfth century; Jonathan Phillips' insights into the Second Crusade and the diplomatic efforts of the settlers to generate military support from their Christian neighbours; Chris MacEvitt's work on the relationships between local Christians

and the crusaders; and Peter Frankopan's views of the origins of the First Crusade. These are just the highlights. There has been an extraordinary flowering of crusader scholarship in recent years, producing a mass of specialist works and papers, many of which are referred to in the bibliography.[1]

Crusading academics are a wonderfully friendly and hospitable group. This book has benefited greatly from conversations with many of them, including Bernard Hamilton, Denys Pringle, Tom Asbridge, Andrew Jotischky, Andrew Buck, Faith Garrett, Rabei Khamisy, John France, Jaroslav Folda and my old friend Chris Marshall. Mike Fulton has kindly shared some of his wonderful insights into siege warfare and castle-building. Nick Hopkinson, Bob Morrison, Jonathan James, Charles Masefield and John Crowther have all read the text and made much appreciated comments. Similarly, Heather McCallum, Rachael Lonsdale and Marika Lysandrou of Yale University Press have all shown patience and insight far beyond the bounds of professionalism.

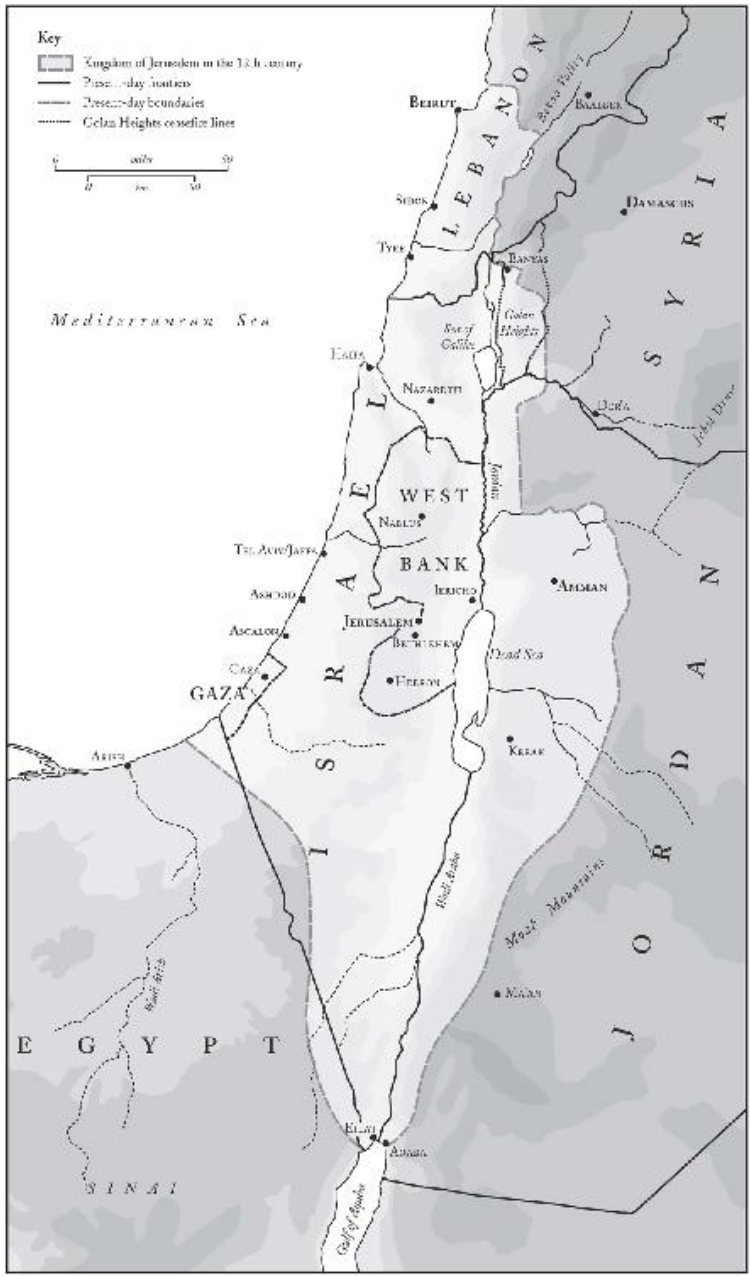
The seminal work in this field, R.C. 'Otto' Smail's *Crusading Warfare*, is still a wonderful read sixty years after it was first published, and it was Otto's enthusiasm and generosity that initially inspired much of this book. A particularly hair-raising 1980s road trip round the medieval battlefields and castles of Israel in the Smail camper-van was a wonderful, and very idiosyncratic, introduction to the subject.

Malcolm Barber's masterly *The Crusader States* (Yale, 2012) has been my constant guide on matters of context, politics and chronology. Malcolm, in common with my father and a strangely disproportionate number of crusading professors, is a life-long supporter of Brentford Football Club, no doubt attracted to both by the perverse pleasures of a hopeless situation and the romance of a lost cause. But it is also a sure indicator of his pragmatic and unpretentious approach to academic, and sporting, matters. He could not have been more charming, helpful or supportive.

Jonathan Phillips, of Royal Holloway, University of London, has been extremely kind and generous, far more welcoming in taking me back into the world of crusader studies than I could have expected. He and Malcolm Barber have both read earlier drafts of this book, spotting many of the worst errors and nudging me towards a clearer understanding of the subject. The remaining mistakes are, of course, all my own work. Ronnie Ellenblum has likewise been an inspiration. His iconoclastic approach to the subject has opened up many new fields of investigation, and his entertaining conversational style always challenges accepted views.

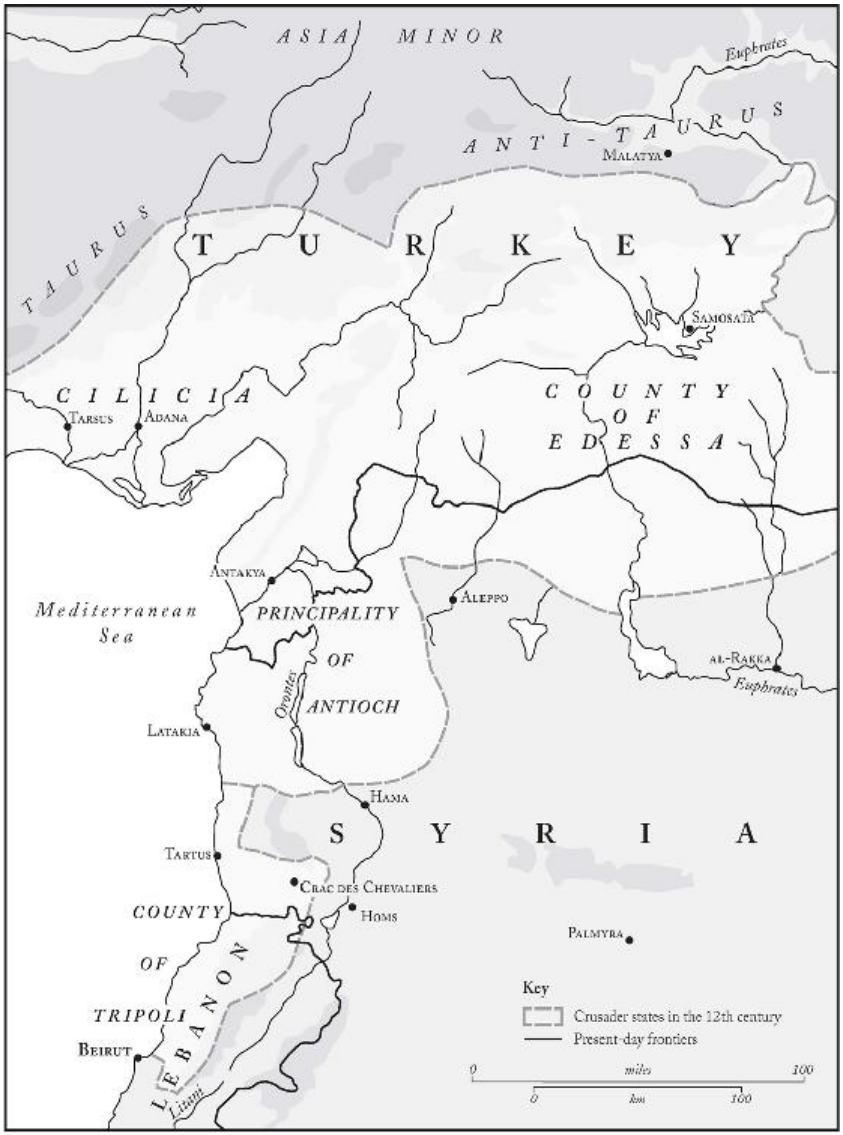
The biggest debt is to Jonathan Riley-Smith, however, my old supervisor at Cambridge, and latterly for my PhD at Royal Holloway.

He died just as this book was being finished. He was friend and mentor to several generations of crusading scholars, and reinvigorated the entire study of the subject. He was an exceptional man, much loved and very greatly missed. If there is a Kingdom of Heaven, it is good to know that he will be waiting for us there with a full pipe, a snuff-stained waistcoat, and his huge laugh.



Map 1 Modern and Medieval (I): The South

Source: After Barber 2012, p. 6 and Riley-Smith 1991.

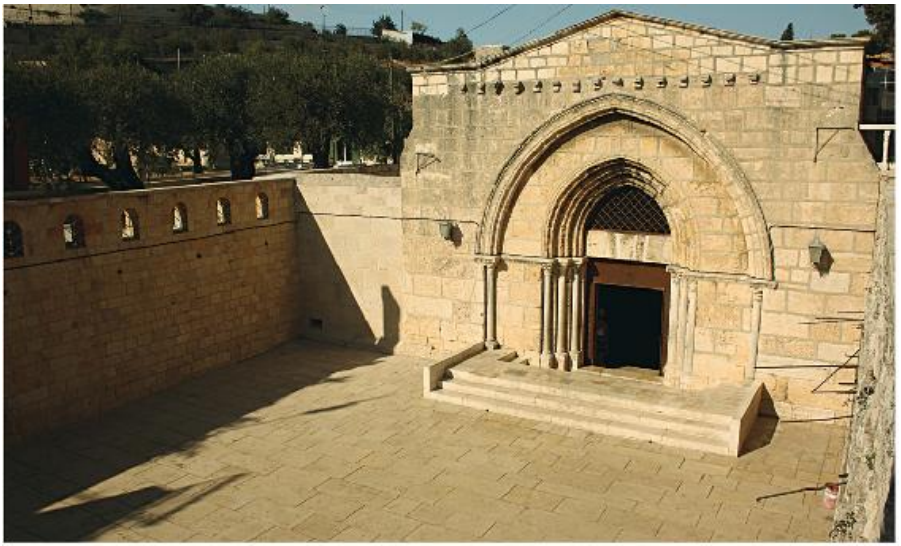


Map 2 Modern and Medieval (II): The North
Source: After Barber 2012, p. 6 and Riley-Smith 1991.

1. The crusader knight. The image of the ‘typical’ knight resonates through the ages. Authority and power, entitlement and martial skills, nobility and the possibility of unstoppable violence, all live with surprisingly little tension within this single representation. Heavily armoured knights were the main battle tanks of the medieval world, and powerful symbols of control: they appear frequently on coins and seals to convey the impression of stability and dominance.

2. The ‘other’ crusaders: Turcopole officers. If the image of the archetypical crusader knight is not entirely untrue, it is, at the very least, only a partial truth. Although their role was consistently downplayed in Frankish chronicles, many, sometimes most, of the soldiers in crusader armies were local Arab or Armenian Christians. Here, two Orthodox Turcopoles ride off to war, wearing light hauberks and carrying spears or short lances. Significantly, however, they are also equipped with ornate quivers and bows. The Turcopoles were a vital expedient in allowing the relatively

heavy and slow-moving western armies to retain operational flexibility in the face of their more mobile opponents.



3 & 4. The Tomb of the Virgin, Jerusalem (above). The simple main entrance to the church gives little clue of the significance of what lies within. The ‘Frankish’ settlers of the Latin East were far more integrated into local communities than we often imagine. On the steps down into the church were the small chapels that held the remains of many members of the royal family, Franks and local Christians alike. When the half-Armenian Queen Melisende of Jerusalem died in September 1161, she was the most powerful and influential female ruler of the period. She chose to be buried in the Tomb of the Virgin, close to her Armenian mother, Queen Morphia, in what is now known as the Tomb of Queen Melisende (below).

5. Communicating with currency. In an age with very limited forms of mass communication, the visual signals conveyed by coinage were a unique opportunity to connect with large groups of people on an almost daily basis. The majority of the populations of the northern crusader states were local Christians. Here we find Tancred, regent of Antioch, seeking to project an aura of solidarity and stability. He is carrying a sword in his right hand and, in a deliberate act of image- building, is wearing a turban on his head, like many of his Armenian and Arab subjects.

6. The cavalry of eastern Christianity. Crusading and crusader armies have a western face, but the movement was instigated by eastern Christians, and the Frankish military were supported by their local Christian populations. This mid-thirteenth-century icon of St George in armour shows the kinds of soldiers that are so often overlooked: local Orthodox knights, mercenaries or auxiliaries, and the Byzantine regular troops that were the allies or occasional enemies of the crusader states.

7. The sword. Superficially, sword design in the west had changed very little since the age of the Vikings. However, the transition from a warrior elite which fought on foot, to one which fought predominantly on horseback, had begun to bring about small but telling adaptations. In this thirteenth-century sword we can see two signs of that transition which make it easier for a mounted warrior to use his sword as a more versatile and effective weapon: the longer grip and the increasingly rounded pommel both allow a cavalryman to extend his reach, using his forearm to much better effect.

8. The helmet. The western ‘nasal’ helmet offered a working compromise between visibility and protection. It had limitations, however, and these quickly became apparent in the east. Prince Roger of Antioch was killed by an upward thrust from a Turkic sword ‘through the middle of his nose right into his brain’, but his death was just one example of a much broader problem. As Muslim armies grew in size, and as their ability to unleash huge arrow-storms increased, so Frankish helmets were forced to evolve. They became more substantial over the course of the twelfth century, incorporating face guards and offering better all-round protection for the head. Visibility and comfort suffered, but it was a price worth paying for survivability on the battlefield.

9. The warhorse. All armies of this period were heavily dependent upon horses. Turkic horse archers required strings of ponies to keep them mobile. The crusaders similarly required large numbers of mounts, several for each knight, as well as others for the Turcopoles, squires and mounted sergeants. But it was the destriers, the warhorses of the knights, that were both the most vital and the most vulnerable; capable of carrying their riders on the famous charge of the Franks, but also strangely fragile. The impact of archery on horseflesh was the great leveller of crusading warfare.

10. The shield. The two-dimensional representation of twelfth-century shields in manuscript illuminations and tapestries encourages us to view them as flat items of kit. In fact, they were often formed along a central spine, to curve round the knight's body or, if he was mounted, to protect his left leg or his horse's flank. The mail hauberk is the most obvious armour of the crusader knight, but the heavy textile jackets worn underneath and the shields carried in front were every bit as vital and did just as much to protect their wearers.

11. Power and intimidation. The force and menace of a fully equipped heavy cavalryman is shown here in stark juxtaposition to the unarmed civilians who are negotiating the surrender of their city. This image of power and military success was often deceptive, however. The Middle East was a region where cities and fortified places assumed huge importance and, particularly inland, mining was often the critical factor in bringing a siege to a successful conclusion. When the Franks succeeded in siege warfare, it was primarily on the coast and largely through the contribution of unsung Italian sappers, artillerists and carpenters.

12. The Tower of David, Jerusalem. Jerusalem was, for many devout Christians, literally the centre of the world, the umbilical cord binding heaven and earth. But although the city was vital for political and religious reasons, its location meant that it was commercially barely viable, and militarily indefensible. The depopulation of the city after the arrival of the crusaders, combined with the perennial Frankish manpower shortages, meant that the city's citadel was of particular importance to the new rulers. With barely enough men to man the city walls, the Tower of David was an important fallback position.

13. Frankish royal palace, Jerusalem. The royal palace of Jerusalem was located adjacent to the Tower of David to improve its defensibility. The idea of Jerusalem had huge resonance in the west and was the focal point of a lively religious tourist trade. It was also an essential symbol to keep support coming in from Europe. To those living in the east, however, it had far less day-to-day significance: the kings of Jerusalem spent most of their time on campaign or at their other palaces.

14. Crac des Chevaliers. Under growing pressure from Muslim field armies, crusader castles improved exponentially from the 1170s onwards. Crac des Chevaliers is an iconic example of the strength and grandeur of these new castles. Although their strategic weaknesses were less obvious their effects were just as profound: during Nur al-Din's invasion of 1167, for instance, even the elite garrison of Crac des Chevaliers was forced to sit impotently within its walls while Zengid troops destroyed much of the surrounding area. In the absence of relief forces capable of meeting invaders face-to-face, the revamped fortifications were an enduring but ultimately very limited instrument of power.

15. Caesarea. The ‘new castles’ were most obviously about walls: walls which were taller, wider and built in intimidating layers. Other, less prominent aspects of their design, such as posterns or, as seen here at Caesarea, deep moats, also played a very important role, however. The late-generation Frankish fortifications were a sophisticated blend of complex and mutually supportive defensive features.

16. The Tower of Flies, Harbour of Acre. Although lost after the disaster at Hattin, the crusader port of Acre was recaptured by the Third Crusade and became the capital of the much diminished Frankish kingdom in Palestine in the thirteenth century. On 18 May 1291, after a six-week siege, Muslim troops finally stormed over the city walls and the surviving Frankish defenders either caught the last ships out past the Tower of Flies at the end of the harbour, or were enslaved or slaughtered in the ensuing panic. The Templar enclave held out for a further ten days before a final massacre took place. The dream of a resurgent Christian Middle East was over.

17. The Fatimid army: the enemy that could be understood. This rare Egyptian illustration of Fatimid and Christian forces fighting outside a fortified city (possibly a depiction of the battle of Ascalon in 1099) shows just how similar the armies of these two sedentary societies were. Heavily armoured cavalry fight on both sides, and slow-moving infantry (some of whom appear to be wearing mail hauberks) provide them with a fixed supporting line and covering fire. The Fatimid troops, like the crusaders, even appear to be carrying the 'tariqa', a Muslim equivalent of the kite shield, which similarly offered greater protection along the length of the body.

18. The three very different faces of Saladin. Here, in an early portrait predating the battle of Hattin, we see a culturally realistic representation. History belongs to the victors, and over time the steppe armies of Turks and Kurds that defeated the crusaders have become visually reimagined as local 'Arabic' warriors. This depiction of Saladin gives a more realistic impression, however, with a stronger flavour of the nomadic heritage that made him and his warriors so dangerous. They were just as alien to the Arab communities of the region as the crusaders themselves.

19. Saladin and Guy of Lusignan. This second, western portrait shows a different but strangely sympathetic view of Saladin. Despite the ferocity of unending war, and its

inevitable atrocities, there could be a grudging respect between elite groups, particularly as the nomadic-heritage warriors of the ‘askar gradually adopted more sedentary cultural and military practices. Here, Saladin and his heavily armoured (and suspiciously Caucasian-looking) bodyguard cavalry seize the True Cross from an ungainly and incompetent Guy of Lusignan, consciously depicted in flight and failure.

20. Saladin Triumphant: reimagining the crusader armies. With this third, modern image of Saladin after the battle of Hattin, we enter into a different and more profound phase of visualising the crusader armies and their opponents. Saladin and his men, Kurdish and Turkic warriors, are portrayed as local Arabs. The defeated Christian armies are represented by dejected European knights. Gone are the Armenian and Arab Christians who made up so much of the Frankish armies. Gone is any sense of the nomadic light horsemen who dictated the dynamics of warfare in the region. The real crusader armies have been quietly forgotten.

PART I

Crusading Warfare

CHAPTER 1

A Primal Social War

It's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then.

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

In the summer of 1119, the army of the Principality of Antioch, the main northern crusader state, was surrounded and overrun by overwhelming numbers of Muslim cavalry, led by their volatile but inspirational commander, Il-Ghazi, the Turkic ruler of Mardin.[1] The Christian casualties were catastrophic, and the scale and shock of the disaster was shown in the name given to the battle: it was simply referred to afterwards as the 'Field of Blood' ('Ager Sanguinis'). Unluckily for him, but very fortunately for us, one of the main chroniclers of the period, Walter the Chancellor, was in the thick of the fighting, and he left a detailed and very moving account of how the battle unfolded.

As the Christian army began to disintegrate, the young crusader commander, Prince Roger of Antioch, gathered his men around him to make a last stand by a fragment of the True Cross in a mobile chapel at the centre of the army. Walter was standing near Prince Roger and witnessed his efforts to keep fighting for as long as possible. He and his household troops took up a defensive position near the Cross and tried to create a rallying point for the rest of the army. Prince Roger, he said, kept up 'the struggle with steadfast mind, though his men lay cut down and dead on all sides, and he never retreated nor looked back'.[2]

Protected by some of the best armour in the principality and surrounded by devoted bodyguards, Roger was a hard man to bring down. But the outcome was inevitable. Eventually, in the close-quarters fighting that signalled the end of the Christian defence in the centre of the army, a sword thrust under the nasal guard of his helmet killed him. The prince 'was struck by a knight's sword through the

middle of his nose right into his brain . . . After this attack, the priest was killed who was carrying that same Cross in his hands.'[3]

Even after Roger's death, the prince's tent and the army's mobile chapel remained a focal point for small groups of Christian soldiers. With the prince's body nearby, one of his knights rallied some troops in front of the shrine. He managed to hold off the attackers briefly, and to kill a Muslim emir, before he and his men were also cut down.[4]

Ager Sanguinis is one of the 'archetypical' crusader battles. It is a bloodthirsty but strangely familiar narrative, and this familiarity leads us to assume that crusading warfare is well understood. The images are iconic. Knights in armour. Saracen cavalry with scimitars. Castles and Bedouin. And overlaying these striking images is an equally colourful political and cultural narrative, which inevitably affects how we view warfare in the region.

But little of Roger's last stand was entirely what it seemed. His 'crusader' army had very few crusaders in it, perhaps none at all. Almost all of his men were local Armenians, native Christian Syrians or Frankish settlers. The heroic knight who led the final defence after Roger's death was himself an Armenian, someone who would have been regarded by many of the more religiously conservative elements in the west as a heretic. The army they had been defeated by, nominally Muslim but with only the haziest view of theological matters, were just as surprising. They were neither local Arabs nor Syrians, but nomadic Turkic tribesmen from the Eurasian steppes: more akin to Hunnic or Mongolian warriors than the 'Saracens' or Bedouin we often envisage them to be, and just as foreign to the region as the Franks, the western settlers.

Our view of the crusades and crusading warfare is distorted by this illusory familiarity. What we believe to be so well known is in fact very rarely what it appears to be. The armies and battles look simple, unchanging and brutal on the surface, but were in fact a surprisingly subtle and complex set of responses to the political and demographic issues at stake. Far from there being a static situation, over the course of the twelfth century we can see a ruthless regional conflict of increasing intensity playing out before us. Things are not just more complex (of course they are, they always are), but also radically different from what we imagine.

In some places and periods, military activity is just an adjunct to social and political life, something that can be outsourced and forgotten. We can read the entire works of Jane Austen without even being aware that she was writing in a combatant state that was participating in wars spanning half the globe. But that is not the case with the crusader states, or their enemies and neighbours. Success in warfare was the precondition of their survival and military

effectiveness was the core of legitimacy and moral authority for all their ruling elites.

Most of us are accustomed to the idea of 'normal' life being one of peace, interspersed with occasional, hopefully relatively brief periods of war, many of which do not touch too intimately upon our lives. This was far from the experience of warfare in the Middle East in the twelfth century. There was a permanent war, interrupted only by occasional, usually fragile periods of truce.[5] Most states existed on a more or less permanent war footing. Economies, diplomacy and the whole-hearted attention of the ruling classes were all directed towards military requirements.

In academic circles, much has been happening to paint a more realistic picture of warfare at the time, and the people who were swept up in it. We now have a far better understanding of how the idea of the crusade originated, and what it had been called in response to. We have a clearer perspective about interactions between the Catholic 'Franks' and the other local Christian denominations, and the relationships that existed between them. We have become aware of a hitherto almost unsuspected level of Frankish settlement, as new evidence has revealed an intensive European rural colonisation programme in the twelfth century, particularly in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Recent archaeological studies allow us to make a radical reappraisal of castle-building, both in terms of how castles evolved and the strategic intent behind them.

The first difficulty we encounter in looking at crusading warfare is in trying to reimagine what it is that we are looking at. Is this warfare driven by religious fanaticism (on both sides), or is it propelled by the far more basic dynamics of issues such as migration or climate change? Are the crusaders the 'foreign intruders'? Was it the Turkic groups from the western Eurasian steppes which dominated Syria, and latterly Egypt as well? Or perhaps the Armenians and Africans employed by the Fatimid Egyptian government? In fact, almost all of the main military forces that we study are based around migrant groups entering from outside the region.

Very little of the evidence conforms to the easy stereotypes that shape most popular contemporary views of the crusades or crusading warfare.

Labels: What You See Isn't Necessarily What You Get

Perhaps most fundamentally, even the labels we apply to the different groups of people involved are either wrong or misleading. Most of the elite troops in all of the main armies were foreigners, ethnically distinct from the societies that funded them. Whether they were Frankish knights in Palestine, Turkic horse archers in Syria or

Armenian heavy cavalry in Egypt, all were migrants. This seems strange to us, but was so normal at the time that contemporary chronicles barely even mention it.

Ethnicity was less important than one might suppose. There was some racial prejudice on all sides, but it was generally directed at the sub-Saharan Africans whose skin colour made them so physically distinctive. There were African troops in the Fatimid army, primarily in what they called their 'Black' ('Sudani') infantry regiments, and there were African infantry in Saladin's Ayyubid army. But in both cases they seem to have been purely used as the 'rank and file', excluded from promotion or the higher status units. There were no African recruits in the Frankish armies that we know of, though the European chroniclers still found time to make prurient and casually racist comments when they appeared in the armies of their opponents.

But otherwise, religion was the main label attached to identity. Different ethnic groups within the Frankish armies are often almost invisible, because they generally identified themselves as Christian, rather than Syrian, Arab, Armenian and so on. A Frankish army, for instance, is better envisaged as the army of a Frankish-governed state, rather than an army of Franks. Many, sometimes most, of the soldiers in it would have been local men from a wide range of ethnic and denominational backgrounds. That relaxed lack of clarity is reflected in the way ethnic terms are used.

The relative lack of importance attached to ethnicity is perhaps encapsulated in the extraordinarily vague way in which different groups are described, where a lack of interest is reinforced by ignorance. 'Turk' has a specific meaning to it, and generally implies the distinctive physical appearance and fighting styles of people with Eurasian steppe heritage.[6] This was an important distinction to make, as their capabilities in warfare were so unique and effective, but beyond that, most ethnic labels are extremely loose, or absent altogether.

The word 'Saracen' might be used to describe Muslims, but seems to have very little ethnic specificity about it. The term 'Arab' often denotes Bedouin groups, but not always. Similarly, 'Syrian' can sometimes be used as a catch-all term for Muslims outside Egypt but, confusingly, it does not always mean that: depending on context, it can also mean 'local Christians'.

The different ethnic backgrounds of the groups of men we encounter in the chronicles were generally felt to be too unimportant to be even mentioned. On the Frankish side, we often only become aware of the ethnicity of participants by accident, for instance where the entire garrison of a 'crusader' castle turns out to be Syrian, or where the last stand of a group of household troops is led by a knight

whose name shows that he is Armenian (though even here, it is not thought important enough to be said explicitly). By the middle of the twelfth century many of the local 'Frankish' families, including the royal family itself, were of mixed race. But this is something we generally have to infer and remember, rather than confront. Religion, rather than ethnicity, was the key cultural marker.[7]

Societies and Soldiers

It is a truism that armies are a product of the societies that create them. Surely one can at least take this as a given?

Yet even this is barely true of the crusades. Far from representing their societies, each of the main armies was predominantly foreign, using fighting styles and techniques alien both to each other and to the societies they represented. They were also usually fighting to defend the interests and privileged positions of elite foreign rulers and social groups, rather than those of their local communities.

The primary reason for this was that Palestine, Egypt and Syria were largely demilitarised, at least in terms of their native populations. These were generally sedentary societies, settled communities whose civilian inhabitants had long since delegated warfare to 'professional' troops. As the Muslim invasions took place from the seventh century onwards, and the Romano-Byzantine regular forces gradually pulled out of the area, the lack of military institutions among the mass of the population meant that the region was vulnerable to foreign rulers and their armies.

This was apparent across the entire region. There were few Egyptians in the Fatimid army, the majority of whose troops were not even Muslim. Saladin's early Ayyubid 'Egyptian' army was similarly characterised by the singular under-representation of Egyptians. The conquerors of Syria were Turkic warlords and their regimes were upheld by the nomadic-heritage mercenaries that they continued to attract from the steppes. The Christian states in Syria and Palestine were likewise dominated by more warlike entrants from outside the area, Frankish and Armenian warriors who fought in their own distinctive style. The local communities of the Middle East were a military blank sheet: they doubtless provided recruits on an individual basis, but the core of their contribution was focused around economic activity rather than their martial qualities.

Frankish and Syrian Muslim armies were never products of their local societies. The societies that gave them purpose and made them effective were originally founded on the Eurasian steppes or on the fields of western Europe, rather than the Middle East.

Far from being products of their societies, in many ways the opposite was true. The crusader states existed on a permanent war

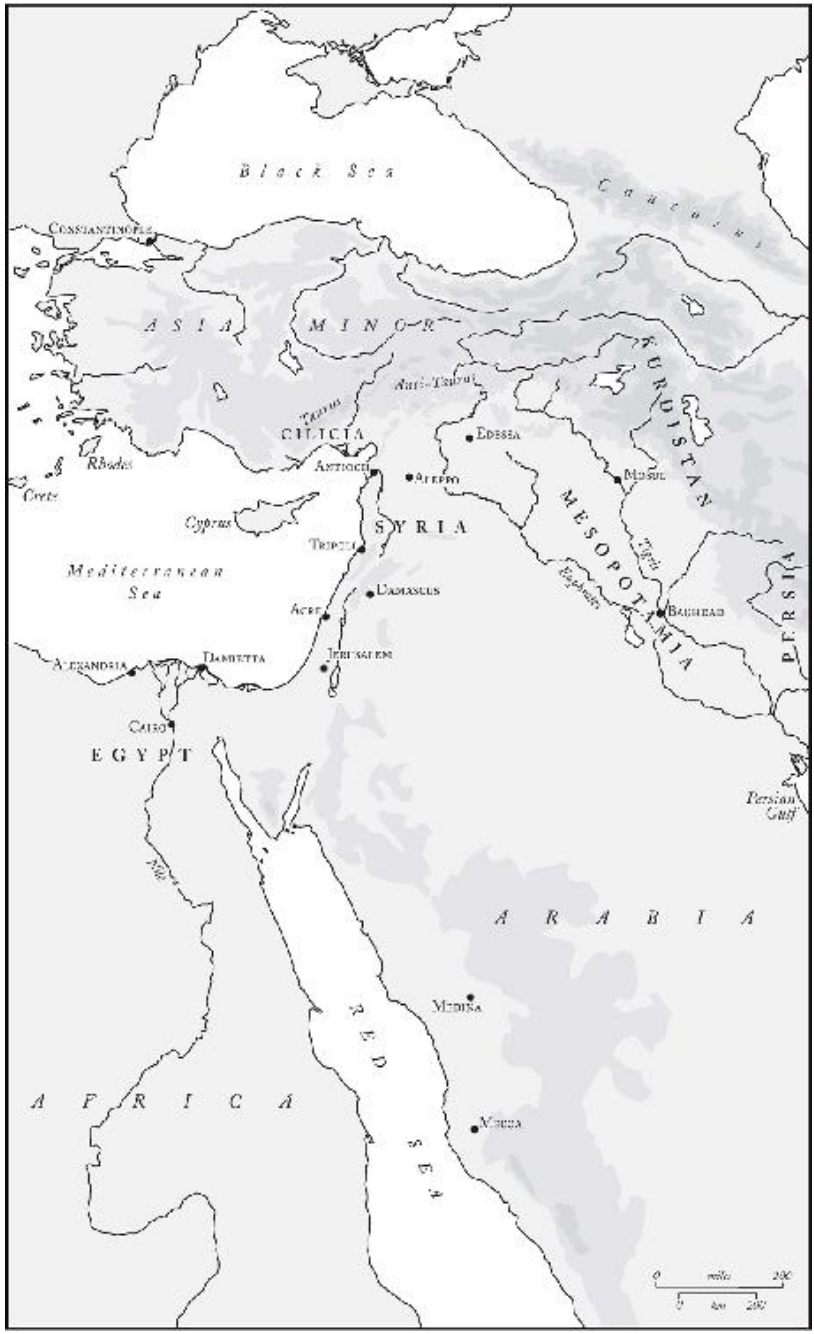
footing, particularly towards the end of the twelfth century. Politics, diplomacy, colonial settlement, taxation and the economy were all ultimately geared towards the needs of the military. Similarly, Saladin's new Ayyubid empire was a machine built at huge human cost to accumulate resources and transfer them directly into military power, with the vast majority of all public spending being devoted to the upkeep and expansion of the army. Contemporary states were being ruthlessly fashioned to create the armies their rulers needed. These were not armies shaped by society: they were societies being shaped by their armies.[8]

A Primal Social War

Even more fundamentally, when looking at warfare in the twelfth century, it is important to try to step back from our current labels and cultural assumptions, and to look instead at what the underlying dynamics might have been at the time. If the armies of the period are not what we imagine, that is possibly even more true in terms of how we visualise the key drivers of the conflict, which are still largely misunderstood.

We often define conflict in this time and place in terms of religious affiliation. In the west, we talk about 'crusading warfare' and 'crusading armies', implying that spiritual beliefs were the defining pivot around which we need to describe military activity. Others, for similar reasons, might look to explain the warfare as 'jihadist' in nature. Even beyond this, contemporary politics would encourage us to extrapolate further, and describe this warfare as being between religious cultures in a broader sense: perhaps, say, the clash of an Islamic civilisation with that of western societies born out of very different social and political traditions.

It is entirely possible to write a broad military history of the crusades without mentioning religion, however. An anthropologist, examining the vast ebbs and flows of human development, might perhaps be unaware of the detailed religious background to the crusades. If so, he or she would not necessarily jump to the conclusion that the root of the conflicts in the region lay in a clash of religions or even, other than in the very broadest sense, a clash of cultures. Religion was a powerful proximate factor in determining patterns of conflict (i.e. it had an obvious immediate role to play), but the ultimate explanation of the crusades (i.e. the higher-level cause) is to be found elsewhere. Ironically, the root causes were more topical than ever, but they were not the ones we might naturally assume. As we shall see, climate change and massive migration crises were fundamentally far more important than religion in shaping warfare in the region during the period of the crusades.[9]



Map 3 The Near East in the Twelfth Century
Source: After Barber 2012, p. 6.

It was the eruption of nomadic tribes into the region that changed everything. In the middle of the eleventh century, a loose confederation of Turkic warbands, led by the Seljuk family (recent

converts to Sunni Islam), left their tribal steppe-lands north of the Caspian and Aral seas. They moved south, capturing much of modern Iran and northern Syria. By 1055 the Seljuks had taken Baghdad and their leader adopted the title of Sultan ('power'). The settled lands of Byzantine Anatolia, to the west of this new 'Seljuk empire', inevitably proved attractive. During the course of the 1060s groups of nomadic warriors began to push into the heartlands of what we now know as Turkey, raiding and destabilising the local communities. The Byzantine authorities were overwhelmed and on the defensive, as they struggled to keep the nomads at bay.[10]

Once established in large parts of Anatolia, other prosperous areas to the south became viable and increasingly appealing targets for steppe nomads: Syria, Palestine and perhaps even Egypt. Smaller groups had been successfully infiltrating into the area for several years. 'Atiyya, the lord of Aleppo, had made the mistake of calling in large numbers of Turkic mercenaries in 1064, to help him with the dynastic in-fighting that threatened his position. Entirely predictably, the nomads soon turned on their employer and helped oust him. In their wake, other tribal bands started to come into the region, looking opportunistically for work or plunder.[11]

Where private enterprise led the way, the 'official' interests of the Seljuk empire would inevitably follow. In January 1071, the Seljuk Sultan Alp Arslan led the first major expedition, taking an army across the Euphrates with the intention of heading south through Syria and on towards Egypt. Muslim historians knew the significance of this step: this marked, they said, the point at which the 'reign of the Turks' began and the 'reign of the Arabs' ended.[12]

The move into Syria had to be cut short, however. Byzantine troops, commanded by their emperor Romanus IV Diogenes, were gathering to attempt to stabilise their lands in Anatolia and rescue the shattered Christian communities. Alp Arslan and his army moved north to confront them. They met at Manzikert in August 1071, where the nomadic forces were overwhelmingly victorious. The battle was a disaster for the Byzantine empire. The emperor himself was captured and held for ransom. Anatolia was overrun and Nicaea, just a few miles east of Byzantium, was established as a local Turkic capital.

Manzikert opened the floodgates for further nomadic penetration. With Byzantine forces shattered, nomadic groups, nominally under Seljuk authority but in practice often acting independently, had a much freer hand to push into Syria and Palestine. By the 1080s nomadic warlords had taken over most of the Syrian city states and much of Palestine.

As one might expect of such groups, the states they created were not highly centralised or bureaucratic. These were family-run

operations, characterised by opportunism, pragmatism and localised self-interest. Individual warlords were under the theoretical authority of Baghdad, but in practice they all competed fiercely with one another to carve out their own power bases and revenue streams. In each of the provincial cities Turkic warlords and their mercenary bands established regimes devoted to their personal rule, underpinned by a complex and highly fluid set of allegiances.[13]

The western provinces of the Seljuk empire were already a very loose confederation, but were soon to become even more volatile and unstable. In the space of a few months, between 1092 and 1094, all the major political leaders of the region died, from the vizier of Egypt in the south, to the Seljuk sultan, Malik Shah (Alp Arslan's son) in the north. Civil war broke out throughout the nomadic empire, as Malik Shah's brother and four sons each tried to gain control and carve out their own dominions. Everyone grabbed what they could.[14]

The meltdown of what passed for central control in the Seljuk empire gave the local sedentary powers the opportunity to try to recover some of the lands that had been overrun. In the south, the Shi'ite Fatimid government in Egypt was able to reoccupy most of its lands in Palestine, culminating in the capture of Jerusalem in 1098. Farther north, a resurgent Byzantium and the western 'allies' they had summoned in the form of the First Crusade, were also able to exploit the disunity of the warring nomadic groups. Much of Anatolia was recovered and the Frankish armies were able to push down into Palestine with surprisingly little opposition.

This was the context in which the military history of the crusader states begins. Taking a Eurocentric perspective, we often tend to think of the crusades as taking place in the heart of the old eastern Roman empire, or in the classical provinces of the Middle East. But, as the First Crusade set off, it was nomadic activity that dictated the pace of change in the region. The Seljuks ruled an empire stretching from Syria through to modern Iraq, Iran and on into Afghanistan. In terms of the power politics of the time it is more realistic to envisage the crusades as taking place on the fringes of a new nomadic-heritage empire, rather than at the heart of an old European one.

Herders and Farmers

It would be entirely wrong to suggest that religious belief was irrelevant, or that leaders of the period were just cynically exploiting religious rhetoric for their own ends. These were deeply religious times, and the majority of the population, on all sides and at all levels of society, were true believers. People were intensely religious, to an extent that is almost unthinkable in our more rationalist and secular age. Religion was a consistently powerful rallying cry to pull disparate

interest groups together, and a motivating force for the many genuinely devout people of the period. As we have seen with the death of Prince Roger at Ager Sanguinis, religious symbols were powerful: fragments of the True Cross, mobile shrines and leadership from the clergy were all important features in raising morale and maintaining cohesion on the battlefield. But these were the trappings of recruitment and morale-building: symbols rather than fundamentals, symptoms rather than causes.

Religion was not necessarily the prime mover. The battle lines were never neatly drawn between 'Christians' and 'Muslims'. The sedentary societies were not all Christian. The Fatimid state, one of the leading sedentary powers in the region during the first half of the twelfth century, was led by a Shi'ite Muslim government. Moreover, on the other side, many of the nomads were pagans, Christians or individuals with only the vaguest understanding of the precepts of Islam. Saladin, like Zengi and Nur al-Din, the Muslim strongmen who preceded him, spent the majority of his military career fighting his co-religionists. Far more fundamentally, nomadic-heritage warlords conquered all of the local Muslim states long before they were able to overcome the major Christian societies.

Instead, as we shall see throughout this book, nomadic activity was at the centre of the crusades and the defence of the crusader states. Nomadic invasions created the environment in which the crusades were made necessary: beyond the religious rhetoric, albeit often very genuine and inspirational, the crusades were fundamentally a movement to defend the sedentary Christian population of the region from nomadic incursions. Nomads created the situation in which the crusades could, initially at least, be successful, as they destabilised all the existing political entities in the region, replacing them with a volatile patchwork of small warlord-dominated city states. And nomads determined the pattern of conflict in the region: what we rather egotistically call 'crusading warfare' was to a very large extent dictated by the very real dangers posed by nomadic light cavalry.

It was this axis of conflict, the primal struggle between nomadic and sedentary groups, that shaped not just the causes of the warfare, but also its conduct. As one would expect, the sedentary societies tended to field heavy cavalry and blocks of close-order infantry. This was true of the Muslim Fatimid state just as much as the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem or the County of Tripoli. These were armies that had their roots in the towns or settled rural infrastructure of Europe and the Middle East.

Similarly, their main opponents had their origins on the steppes: nomadic or nomadic-heritage cavalry, led by an elite group of warlords with similar cultural roots in the hardships of life on the

Eurasian plains. They tended to field armies based around high-quality horse archers, increasingly focused, as time went on and they became more settled, around a core of heavier ‘askar cavalry (the more regular contingents of the Turkic-Syrian city states), though even they were still armed with bows as well as lances. These nomadic or quasi-nomadic armies were no more familiar to the local peoples of Syria and Palestine than the knights or heavy infantry of the crusaders.[15]

The sedentary societies of the region had productivity and technical advances on their side. Despite the way in which chroniclers love to talk of ‘nomadic hordes’, they had numbers on their side too (at least in terms of total demographics): a sedentary society supports a far higher density of population. But although they were resource-rich, they were also fixed, cumbersome and (in the case of the majority of the population) largely demilitarised. Sedentary societies had greater resources, but they were also strangely fragile when their more complex support systems broke down: they always had a lot to lose.

Nomads, on the other hand, had an almost diametrically opposite set of attributes. Poor by the standards of sedentary societies, they lacked technology or material resources beyond the animals they rode and herded. But they were mobile where the sedentary populations were fixed, robust where the farmers were fragile. They were easily, almost inherently, militarised and they always had far less to lose. The skills that a life of hardship and conflict gave them turned nomadic groups into natural warriors of the highest quality. Members of sedentary societies could learn to fight, but nomads were born to it. There would always be more villagers than nomads, but demilitarised peasants were hardly more effective in confronting them than the domesticated animals they were born to herd.

Even the geography of the conflict was shaped by the underlying characteristics of nomadic versus sedentary warfare. The coastal strip of the eastern Mediterranean could be protected by larger sedentary societies doing what they do best: applying their economic surplus to create a virtuous circle of social and economic stability; building navies to protect and resupply the coastal cities; using engineering techniques to create superb fortifications behind which commercial life could thrive; and gearing their commercial life to generate the economic surpluses that made it all possible.

The hinterland, however, would always be far more exposed. Villages were vulnerable to destruction in a matter of minutes by even small numbers of horsemen. Being entirely dependent on the rural economy for supplies, the urban centres of the Palestinian and Syrian interior were always in a precarious position. Even though Turkic horsemen were relatively weak in terms of siege engineering, any

inland town could eventually be taken by a large and determined nomadic group. To capture the coastal towns, on the other hand, nomads needed the injection of sedentary skills and resources. Determination and good cavalry were not enough. It is exactly this ebb and flow which we see being played out in the regional history of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Push and Pull

The antagonism between sedentary and nomadic societies is a perennial theme in human history (particularly before the invention of gunpowder) but the trigger to set off a major pulse of migration and warfare, such as happened in the Middle East at this time, is almost invariably the culmination of extreme 'push' and 'pull' factors.

The 'pull' factors, from the perspective of the nomads, were certainly present. The specifics are always different but the basic impetus lies in a diminishing ability of sedentary societies to produce large economic surpluses and a corresponding reduction in their ability to defend themselves: economic activity in decline meant that military resources would be proportionately diminished. As the ability for defence is degraded, so the inland villages and towns become increasingly vulnerable and, as one would expect, are the first to fall to nomadic incursions. At this point the benefits of attack begin to outweigh the risks. All the attractions of the sedentary world seem capable of being grasped: precious metals, women, animals, food, all become available. The settled communities have luxuries just waiting to be taken.

The 'push' factors varied, but for a major pulse of activity such as this, climatic change was almost always a prime mover. There is significant evidence that climate change in the eastern Mediterranean and western Eurasian steppes in the period immediately preceding the crusades had a significant impact on migration flows.

The chronicles can often appear circumstantial and anecdotal, but it is clear that the incidence of significant episodes of severe cold and droughts in the region increased sharply in the tenth and eleventh centuries, with extensive famines in the Jazira, Baghdad, Mesopotamia and Iran.[16] In Egypt, however, surviving records of the measurements of the water levels of the Nile provide a uniquely quantitative and unequivocal dataset that shows just how much the environment had changed. In the entire period ad 300–900 there were only eleven recorded years of drought along the Nile, an average of less than two such climatic catastrophes every century. By the period 950–1072, however, there were ten times as many droughts in the Nile Valley, with an average of one disastrous crop every four or five years.[17] The climate was changing, and having a potentially disastrous

impact on the entire region.

Stable, well-administered sedentary societies had reserves of food and could, just, absorb temporary or infrequent climatic shocks. But it meant that they had little to spare, and it subjected those societies to severe stress. This stress was at least partially reflected in their reduced ability to resource armies with which to defend themselves. Nomadic societies on the steppes, on the other hand, had very limited food reserves and even more limited options. They needed to migrate towards more plentiful food supplies and, if they were refused access to them, they were well suited to take them by force.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries, just as it had towards the end of the Roman empire in the west, a deteriorating environment on the steppes was pushing hardened people, always on the borderline of desperation, into truly desperate actions.[18] These factors played out almost exactly as one would have expected, regardless of religious preferences, ethnicities or cultures.

This was not the kind of climate change which merely has a theoretical impact on crop yields or the patterns of agrarian life. These were life-changing climatic catastrophes, instrumental in unleashing waves of desperate and highly militarised nomadic bands into Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine. It was these migratory pulses, propelled by climatic disaster and the potential for rich pickings, rather than religious belief, that provided the main dynamic for the crusades and crusading warfare.[19]

Warfare in the region was a direct function of this changing dialogue between nomadic and sedentary societies. If we can detach ourselves from our Eurocentric tendencies, it is clear that the crusading armies were actors in, rather than directors of, the drama that unfolded from the mid-eleventh century onwards. The dialogue started long before the crusaders arrived, and it continued long after they left. All the major changes in the pace and direction of warfare in the region were dictated by nomadic and nomadic-heritage states, with their powerful cavalry armies, rather than being driven by sedentary societies. The crusaders had an interesting part to play, and they had far more than just a walk-on role. But we need to keep a sense of perspective about their significance.

The Pulses of Nomadic Activity

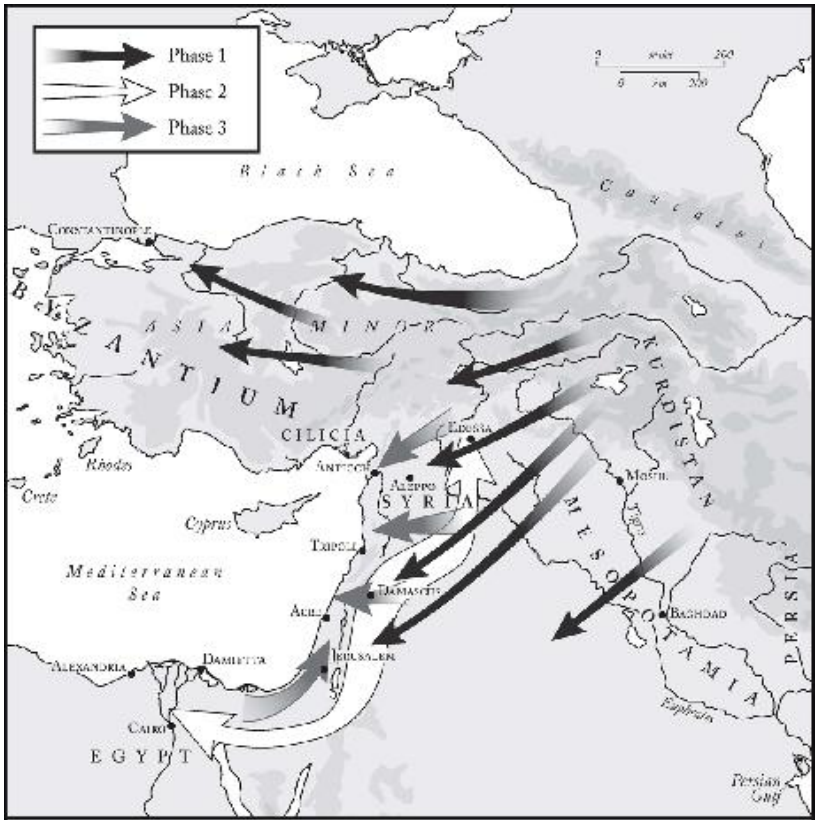
In later chapters we shall look in more detail at the development of warfare in the region throughout the twelfth century. Before we do so, however, it is perhaps helpful to take a step back and look at the broad pulses of change. One can characterise these as three main phases of military and political activity: ‘Chaos and Infiltration’ (*c.* 1064–1140); ‘Consolidation’ (*c.* 1140–70); and ‘Conquest’ (*c.* 1170

onwards). In each of these phases it is no coincidence that we find the nomadic or nomadic-heritage peoples playing a leading role and, in most cases, holding the initiative.

Phase 1: Chaos and Infiltration (c. 1064–1140)

The first phase was characterised, as we have seen, by increasing infiltration into the region of bands of Turkic warriors, sometimes invited (generally as mercenaries), but often just moving in opportunistically, propelled by climate change on the steppes and attracted by the prospect of plunder in the fertile lands to the south.

Although the crusades had been initiated by the Byzantines as a way of trying to forestall these nomadic incursions into Asia Minor, by the time the Frankish armies arrived in Syria almost all the local inland centres had been overrun by Turkic groups, and the main sedentary states of the interior were under the control of nomadic warlords or their successors. The major Syrian centres were taken over in the 1070s (Aleppo in 1070, Jerusalem in 1073, Damascus in 1075 and so on).[20] As we shall see, their nomadic-heritage warlords were kept in power by armies composed largely of Turkic warriors, second-generation nomads in the case of the ‘askar (the more ‘regular’ contingents), and supplemented by first-generation nomadic entrants (Turcomans or ‘wild Turks’) for larger-scale expeditions.



Map 4 Pulses of Nomadic Activity in the Middle East, *c.* 1064–1187
Source: After Barber 2012, p. 6.

The politics of the steppes and the nomadic armies that ventured down into the Middle East were brutal and unnerving. Looking at the example of Il-Ghazi again, his contemporaries knew that he had not

made his way to the top by accident or through a winning personality. His father Artuq had taken warbands down into Palestine at the end of the eleventh century, and by 1086 he and his family were in control of Jerusalem. By 1091, when his father died, Il-Ghazi and his brother were the de facto rulers of central Palestine. He was ejected from Jerusalem after a siege by Fatimid armies in 1098, but even then he landed on his feet, and took over the lordship of Mardin, about 40 miles south-west of Mosul.[21]

Christian chroniclers later described his army as a kind of horde on the move, implausibly suggesting numbers of 80,000 men or more.[22] But even the Muslim chroniclers, with a natural tendency to exaggerate the enemy's strength and minimise their own, felt that the sheer size of Il-Ghazi's army made it something special and commented that about '20,000 men came to join him'.[23] By the time local volunteers, the Aleppan 'askar and mercenaries were added, he had one of the most formidable armies in the region in living memory.

The fact that so many of his army were foreigners to the Middle East was obvious. This influx had the appearance of a temporary migration, rather than just hiring in a few bands of itinerant mercenaries. As one Latin chronicler bitterly described them, they were 'enemies who came from the four corners of the world, in addition to those who raged against our men with swords from within the region'.[24]

With numbers like this coming down from the steppes, it was no surprise that most of the more exposed hinterland was soon overrun. But the sedentary societies had greater luck in retaining the coastal cities that nomads traditionally found harder to capture. The Byzantines managed to keep most of the coast of what we now call Turkey and Syria. The Fatimid Egyptians, who, like the Byzantines, had a substantial navy, held onto the ancient and heavily fortified maritime cities of Palestine. The crusaders were an important new factor, but they were just another component of the inevitable sedentary attempts to protect themselves and, where possible, launch local counter-offensives to regain what they had lost.

The resurgence of sedentary power in the region (both Byzantine and Frankish) kept the nomads at bay for almost half a century. They were able to do so, not just through their own efforts, but because the nomadic-controlled hinterland was disunited. These Turkic-run mini-states generally operated as 'family businesses', so the potential always existed to exploit their competitive instincts and play on the localised nature of their perceived self-interest. As the century progressed, however, they were gradually rolled up into increasingly larger groupings. Something altogether more dangerous began to emerge.

By the middle of the twelfth century, larger, amalgamated societies under nomadic-heritage rulers were developing, able to mount a new wave of offensives. The most ruthless and successful of the Turkic leaders, Zengi and, later his son, Nur al-Din, were gradually able to bring much of the fragmented hinterlands under their control. As they started to integrate the resources of their sedentary subjects, they were increasingly able to construct a new, hybrid, war machine, increasing the size and sophistication of their armies and improving their ability to conduct sieges.[25]

These new hybrid armies were formidable. For the first time, they were able to combine the resources of large settled communities to support large numbers of 'regular' troops in the 'askars, together with 'sedentary' specialist troops such as artillerists and miners to professionalise the siege train. Critically, they were also able to use the money generated by their sedentary subjects, together with the motivational spark and propaganda value of a 'religious war', to attract even larger numbers of high-quality nomadic cavalry down from the steppes.

Turkic troops from Syria first overran and reoccupied the most isolated of the sedentary hinterlands, carrying out a series of ferocious assaults which completely destroyed the Frankish County of Edessa in the period 1144–50. But that was only the beginning. Nur al-Din launched a number of debilitating attacks on the crusader states, leaving them in no doubt that the balance of military power had shifted considerably. During the late 1160s, coordinated attacks on their eastern frontiers showed just how stretched Frankish resources were, with Turkic cavalry increasingly able to pillage the rural landscape at will. Lightning strikes on crusader castles became more successful and demoralising. A whole generation of fortifications, hitherto described by the chroniclers as 'impregnable', were shown to be ludicrously vulnerable to the new, larger and more sophisticated armies and their siege trains.[26]

But although pressure continued to be applied to each of the three main sedentary powers, the Byzantines, the crusaders and the Fatimids, it was obvious that Fatimid Egypt was the most vulnerable. As a Shi'ite state, Egypt had always found it difficult to forge lasting alliances with the Sunni Turkic entrants from the north. From 1105 onwards, the Fatimid armies had gradually become disengaged from Palestine, increasingly inclined to accept the inevitable and, rather than try to eject the Franks, use them instead as a buffer between Egypt and the nomadic-run Syrian states further north. The Egyptian army had proved itself generally inferior to the crusaders, despite its advantage in resources and numbers, and the Fatimid rulers settled

back into the more passive role of watching their enemies damage each other.

Egypt's military decline was accelerated by a series of debilitating civil wars and intense bouts of political in-fighting. The capture of Ascalon in 1153 was seen at the time as a major turning point. But even before that happened, the Fatimid state was very visibly the weakest kid in the playground. It was only a matter of time before one of the other players in the region took its lunch money.[27]

Phase 3: Conquest (c. 1170 onwards)

The tipping point came in 1169. Despite fierce competition from the Franks, Nur al-Din's Turkic–Kurdish troops overpowered the Fatimid regime in Egypt in a series of campaigns in the late 1160s. This was obviously bad news for the crusader states from a geopolitical perspective: they were now surrounded. Even more worryingly, however, the resources of Egypt and an increasingly united Syria now became available for the financing of a large-scale nomadic-heritage army, one which was qualitatively and quantitatively superior to its predecessors.[28]

This third phase of nomadic activity in the region created a situation which made the position of the surviving sedentary societies increasingly untenable, and put the ability of their armies to protect them more and more in doubt. By 1170 the conflict entered a new and particularly dangerous phase. The nomadic-heritage warlords now controlled such large hybrid armies that they were able to launch a fresh wave of assaults on the remaining sedentary outposts on the coast. These were always going to be the most difficult to take, and that is why, inevitably, they held out longest.

In these nomadic hybrid armies of the 1170s and 1180s, we find the combination that would eventually destroy the last remaining sedentary powers in the region: large numbers of troops, funded by the productivity of their settled subjects; better siegecraft, made feasible by sedentary technology; and the resources to attract and retain large numbers of hardened first- and second-generation nomadic warriors to destroy the enemy's rural infrastructure and dominate the battlefield.

The Muslim army of the summer of 1187, mustered for the campaign that culminated in the climactic battle of Hattin, was just such a force. The numbers were certainly in place. Saladin said that even the widest plain was too narrow for his troops and that the dust from their progress obscured the sun. Saladin's secretary, the ever enthusiastic Imad ad-Din, wrote that the ground disappeared under the Muslim tents when they camped and that 'the vast sea of his army surrounded the lake of Tiberias [i.e. the Sea of Galilee], while the

spread of his tents made that plain seem narrow'.[29]

The huge numbers at Saladin's disposal, and the large proportion of nomadic light cavalry in the army, gave him the potential to spread out and destroy whichever region he was passing through, together with much of the adjacent lands. Within a couple of days, Galilee was burning. As one Frankish chronicle said: they 'overran and laid waste the area . . . Since they found the region deserted by men, who had fled out of fear of them, they set fire to the threshing floors and put everything they found into the flames. The whole region flamed in front of them like a ball of fire.'[30]

Saladin had built an army of overwhelming numbers, and one which was characterised by the huge destructive capacity of steppe horsemen. But he had also used the resources of his new empire, and the tax revenues of his largely sedentary subjects, to build a highly professional core of troops: more heavily armoured and better able to meet the Franks in close combat; better disciplined and paid to stay on campaign for longer periods of time; and backed up by the siege equipment and specialist skills that allowed a cavalry army to conquer land, rather than just devastate it.

While his heavier troops pinned the Frankish army down in their camp at Saffuriya, and his steppe cavalry were burning Galilee, Saladin was simultaneously able to start the task of capturing and dismantling the Frankish towns, destroying the commercial population centres as well as the rural communities. This was multi-tasking on a scale that crusader commanders could barely envisage, and only made possible by the increasing imbalance of resources available to the protagonists.

The old-style walls of the nearby town of Tiberias (the administrative centre of the region, and home to the princes of Galilee) had not had the benefit of the major upgrades which had made many of the crusader frontier castles more formidable over the previous two decades. Equally unhelpfully, most of the garrison were with the Frankish field army, mustered at the springs of Saffuriya. Skilled manpower was in such short supply that crusader field armies could only be created by stripping castle garrisons back to the bone. Saladin had brought his specialist corps of Khurasanian miners with him, accompanied by a siege train and artillery. By nightfall his men had managed to pull down part of a tower, and the town was overrun.[31]

Within a couple of days, the Frankish field army would be destroyed at the battle of Hattin. The greatest army the crusader states had ever been able to raise was surrounded and beaten. Those who survived to surrender were executed on the spot or taken off into slavery. The job of destroying the defenceless Frankish communities of

the hinterland could begin in earnest.

Primal Conflict

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of this analysis (certainly from a modern perspective) is the absence of religion as a necessary explanation or precondition. The fact that most of the nomads in question were, nominally at least, Muslim, helps blind us to the fact that it was the Muslim sedentary societies who arguably suffered most and were the first to succumb to the invaders from the steppes. The Arabs in Syria and the Shi'ite Fatimids in Egypt lost power long before the crusaders or Byzantines did.

The Christian sedentary societies in Palestine and Syria lasted longer because they were able to call on external help from less threatened areas which were still under sedentary control: Byzantium, Sicily and western Europe. They maintained an active foothold in the region, primarily along the coast and were able to limp along for over a century after they had lost most of their hinterlands.

Labels of religion and culture create a convenient mirror in which we can see our contemporary anxieties reflected, but they arguably make it more difficult, rather than easier, to understand the true sources of the conflict. Rather than 'jihadists' and 'crusaders', the fundamental narrative of warfare in the twelfth century in the Middle East is the story of the interaction between herders and farmers: the inexorable crisis when 'push' and 'pull' factors on the edge of the steppes create a 'perfect storm'.

In the pre-gunpowder age, if sedentary societies are weak and nomadic societies are desperate, the latter become an almost unstoppable force, running out of impetus only when they become seduced and absorbed into the sedentary societies they have conquered. As we shall see in more detail in subsequent chapters, an armed struggle gathered pace throughout the twelfth century, in which the crusader states exerted themselves to raise increasingly large and effective armies. They could improve the quality of their fighting men. They could adapt surprisingly quickly to local conditions. But in the face of such fundamental demographic and climatic shifts, they were only delaying the inevitable.

The ‘Eastern Front’ of Medieval Warfare

The ferocity and unpredictability of warfare between nomadic and sedentary societies, with their wildly different attributes and cultural norms, had profound consequences.[1]

No one should ever try to pretend that medieval warfare was anything other than intensely brutal and violent. In eleventh-century Europe the killing of prisoners and the decapitation of corpses in the aftermath of battle was not uncommon, particularly in instances where the enemy could be characterised as ‘barbarians’, or as somehow culturally different from the victors.

But by the twelfth century there were much clearer boundaries and norms about what constituted acceptable behaviour on the battlefield. These boundaries might sometimes be more apparent in transgression than in observance, but there were boundaries nonetheless. The growth of a concept of ‘chivalry’, driven by the self-interest of elite warrior groups and the sensibilities of a shared Christian culture, gradually created a more humane approach to the conduct of warfare, particularly with regard to the aftermath of battle and the treatment of prisoners.[2]

Warfare between societies with a similar cultural heritage was still bloodthirsty but there were generally recognised limits. There was empathy between participants, particularly between those of similar social standing, and the consequences of victory or defeat were better defined. In western Europe, this might mean little more than a change of senior management. Peasants in the field, other than those unlucky enough to be on the path of a manoeuvring army, might well be largely unaware of the outcomes: the consequences need not have been more personal than, say, for the employees of a modern company being taken over by a conglomerate.

Conflict in the east was very different. The levels of cultural mismatch in crusading warfare were far more extreme. This was often reflected in the disinhibition shown by participants, and the ways in

which this changed their behaviour, ratcheting up the consequences of failure.[3] Our unlucky friend, Walter the Chancellor, for instance, having lived through the trauma of horrific defeat on the battlefield, was captured by the Turkic victors and left us an exceptionally detailed account of what prisoners of war might expect. He and his comrades were forced to suffer the torments of Il-Ghazi and his men as they went on a sadistic and drink-fuelled torture festival for several weeks after the Frankish defeat. Walter pointedly fails to tell us of the exact circumstances of his own captivity (presumably finding it too harrowing to go back over the experience), but left a detailed account of what happened to some of his comrades.

About 500 Antiochene prisoners were taken on the battlefield. Walter describes how they were trussed up in pairs with 'their hands twisted behind their backs and their feet bound with iron chains and other torments very tightly, in the manner of dogs tied together two by two by the neck, waiting in a circle bent over to the ground'.[4] This was a traditional way of shackling and humiliating prisoners. Usama ibn Munqidh, the Muslim author and diplomat, writing of his experiences with the captive Frankish garrison at Kafartab just a few years earlier, described a very similar situation, when he and his men 'were removing the prisoners in pairs, each pair chained to a soldier from Shaizar'.[5]

Those who were seriously wounded or dying were despatched immediately, but the more systematic processing of the prisoners began soon after the battle. Those whose wounds meant that they were unlikely to make a long-term recovery, or to have any economic value, were put to one side. The prisoners were 'examined in the death tent by the death squad and those men afflicted by severe wounds [were] dragged out of the tent by the hair, using rods, for immediate execution'.[6]

Some prisoners were scalped, as an additional trophy from a successful battle, and 'the badly wounded . . . suffered agonising death with the skin flayed from the living and half-severed head'. Collecting heads was always a triumphal gesture, but for nomadic horsemen, tying scalps to one's horse furniture was a more long-lasting and practical status symbol. About half the prisoners were killed in this way and the surviving prisoners were taken to Aleppo.

It was perhaps just as well that Prince Roger died on the field of battle. Unusually for an age when elite prisoners were generally traded for substantial ransoms, the volatile and intoxicated Il-Ghazi was more interested in leisure activities than money. Ransoms took time to negotiate, and prisoners presented long-term storage problems. Most of Il-Ghazi's men, tribesmen from the steppes, would be gone long before any money arrived. Instead, he went on a massive

drinking binge, no doubt accompanied by his men, and used the prisoners for entertainment rather than profit.

Some inkling of the fate that Roger avoided is given by what happened to the other Christian leaders. Many disappear from the records altogether after the battle, and we do not know if they died in combat or in captivity. Walter talks specifically of the fate of Robert fitz-Fulk the Leper, lord of Zardana, however. Robert, perhaps singled out for attention as the most senior of the Frankish frontier lords, was tortured for several days both psychologically and physically (though, because of his condition, his captors 'dared not touch him'). Robert seems to have suffered a complete nervous breakdown and in between the bouts of torture he 'turned upon himself and plucked ceaselessly at his hair and beard'. To prolong the entertainment he was sent to Tughtigin, the lord of Damascus and his erstwhile friend, 'bound very tightly with iron chains on his neck and hands'.[7]

For whatever reason, perhaps because of their previous relationship, Tughtigin interviewed him but sent him back. Even Il-Ghazi was getting bored by now. Robert was given a last chance to convert to Islam and when he refused, Il-Ghazi personally beheaded him. His head was paraded through the streets of Aleppo for the amusement of the crowds. Eventually the skull of the leper lord was converted into a monumentally unhygienic testament to Il-Ghazi's military prowess and predilection for alcohol. He 'ordered a drinking vessel to be made for him very soon from the skull by a craftsman of impious skill, fashioned from purest gold and precious jewels, and wonderfully decorated, which could be exhibited as a symbol of his courage and victory for him to drink from, and his descendants, during festive celebrations'.[8]

The fate of the other prisoners was also dragged out to add to the celebrations. In the days immediately after Robert's death, the Franks were taken to Il-Ghazi's palace to provide after-dinner diversion, either to be hanged or to have limbs amputated. The entertainments were gradually extended to the rest of the population, and a few days later a group of thirty-seven prisoners were beheaded en masse outside the palace entrance in Aleppo, 'where almost the entire population of the town had assembled'.[9]

Eventually, Il-Ghazi was satiated. He continued partying and 'was placed in his tent by gangs of his own men overcome by wine as was his custom, and he lay as if dead . . . for a period of fifteen days'.[10] Walter was, understandably, not fond of Il-Ghazi, so one assumes some prejudice on his part. Even among his Muslim admirers, however, he had a reputation for drinking and Walter's version seems broadly accurate. Usama, for instance, says that 'when Il-Ghazi used to drink wine, he would be drunk for twenty days. And he took to drink

after destroying the Franks and killing them, going on a drunken spree from which he never recovered', until the army of Jerusalem arrived at Antioch to stabilise the situation.[11]

Crusading warfare was different. Levels of cultural empathy between participants were significantly lower. This was a seemingly never-ending series of wars that were extreme in their intensity, and highly variable in their outcomes. These were conflicts, moreover, where the asymmetry of approach of each protagonist limited their ability to manage risk, and where the consequences of defeat could be unthinkable. In these extreme circumstances, the pressure to perform was absolute. Everyone was forced to engage in a debilitating and frenzied struggle that spanned most of the twelfth century.

'Total War' as a Driver for Crusading Warfare

Lack of cultural empathy between nomads and farmers, combined with the brutalising effects of continual warfare, added up to something akin to 'total war'. There were unusual levels of brutality on both sides. This was the Eastern Front of medieval warfare. Societies were fully geared up for war on a semi-permanent basis, and the consequences of failure, particularly for the Frankish settlers and their families, were well understood from the very beginning.

When the Christian armies of Syria were defeated at the battle of Harran in 1104, for instance, it was not just the defeated soldiers who were massacred. Bands of nomadic horsemen, with no desire to settle the land and only limited time to exploit their victory before they returned home, devastated local communities throughout the entire region. Matthew of Edessa makes clear the scale of the disaster for the civilians in the area, saying that 'the whole land was covered with blood and corpses of more than thirty thousand Christian faithful, and so the region became depopulated'.[12]

Similarly, after the collapse of Edessa in 1144, the first crusader state to be overrun, Turkic mercenaries wiped out the entire Frankish community, civilians as well as soldiers. The only survivors were those who fled while they were still able to do so. A native Christian chronicler emphasised that the Frankish population were singled out for special treatment, saying that the 'Turks preserved the lives of all our people, the Armenians and the Greeks who had survived, but they killed the Franks wherever they could'. The local non-Frankish Christians were given a temporary reprieve, but were killed or driven out a couple of years later.[13]

Frankish concerns about the destruction of their communities were not a paranoid fantasy. After the defeat of the main Frankish field army at the battle of Hattin in 1187, the entire fabric of the Frankish rural population, hundreds of villages and settlements, were

destroyed. Prisoners of war were clumsily executed on the battlefield by amateurs, for the entertainment of their Turkic captors, or taken off into slavery. The majority of the civilian Frankish population, mindful of the range of possible outcomes awaiting them, none good but some worse than others, seem to have fled. Then as now, fear of murder or rape is the best tool of those looking to remove entire communities: as the less regular elements of Saladin's armies spread out across the hinterlands of Palestine, those who were too slow to escape were either killed or taken into captivity.

When the Christian monk Thietmar visited the area in 1217–18 there were still many native Christians in Palestine (they were perhaps still a majority of the local population in many places), but no trace of the Frankish communities that had lived there in large numbers only a few years earlier. There were Frankish prisoners in Damascus, who had recently been brought into the city, each carrying the severed head of a fellow Christian around his neck. And he came across English and French prisoners of war by the Red Sea, almost surreally running a fishing operation for the Egyptian government, and living in a castle which acted as a form of open prison: it was so isolated that there was nowhere they could escape to.

But there was only one Frankish civilian. Poignantly, Thietmar met an elderly French widow living in the suburbs of the once mighty fortress of Montréal, permitted to live out her last days there as she was so obviously harmless. She gave him food and helped him make arrangements with Bedouin guides for the next stage of his journey. But that human flotsam was the entire remnant that he encountered of the old Frankish civilian communities. Violent removal from the region was not just a theoretical possibility that propelled the armed struggle and kept the Frankish military on their toes: it was the reality that they tried to avert for as long as possible.[14]

Adaptation and Agility

'Medieval' is not a word normally associated with strategic thinking, innovation and adaptability. When a character in *Pulp Fiction* says 'I'm going to get medieval on your ass', you are more likely (rightly, as it transpired) to associate his intentions with a hammer and a pair of pliers than with an invitation for quiet reflection on strategy or long-term objectives. And, of course, you are not supposed to expect the latter. The word 'medieval' is instantly recognisable to the modern audience as suggesting the imminent possibility of violence of the most brutal and casually unthinking kind.

In the clichés associated with the crusaders we find a rich blend of all the worst aspects of being 'medieval': superstitious and backward, crossed with an unhealthy dash of religious bigotry and racist

isolation. Crusader armies are, for many of us, the archetypal backward military force, driven by social rigidity to create a uniquely conservative and isolated warrior ethic.

In fact the story of crusader armies in the twelfth century was almost exactly the opposite. Conservatism was embedded in the social hierarchy of the crusader states but it was always superseded by the imperatives of survival. The Frankish armies of the twelfth century were extraordinarily adaptable. Under permanent threat of extinction, every option was up for consideration.[15]

Fear and desperation propelled military activity on all sides. Left to their own devices, the nobility of the crusader states were indeed always conservative, happy to bitch about parvenus, squabble about their rights and pursue obscure legal actions against each other. But they were very rarely left to their own devices. In Outremer, the crusader states of the Holy Land, social snobbery and the minutiae of feudal privileges were a fascinating pastime but always trumped by the needs of warfare.[16] A form of warfare, moreover, that was far closer than most medieval conflicts to the 'total war', that is, a war of different cultures and ideologies, that we have become familiar with in the modern era. Losing this kind of war was not merely a case of having reduced revenues or diminished influence at court, as it so often was in Europe: the penalties of defeat could be extinction for the entire Frankish community. The stakes were always far higher than in traditional medieval conflicts, and the crusaders responded accordingly.

Although crusading warfare can often seem unthinkingly brutal and simple from a distance, it was actually a sophisticated and evolving process, a dialogue played out for the highest stakes between Muslim and Frankish leaders who were generally both thoughtful and intelligent. There was a permanent striving for advantage between all the parties, in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Nothing was static and nothing was taken for granted.

The Franks adapted remarkably quickly to the conditions in Palestine, learned lessons and applied flexible thinking to their military planning. They were necessarily dealing with very limited resources. But they were a warlike society, driven by necessity and generally led by intelligent and able commanders. Our natural tendency is to look back on earlier societies with a patronising sense of superiority. This is a mistake. As was once said about human intelligence in the Stone Age, in a society with nothing, you need a much greater level of resourcefulness than one in which your biggest challenge is how to turn on your laptop. The crusaders refined their responses and, within the means available to them, they generally established a sound, intuitive strategic response to the conditions they

faced.[17]

In fact, despite the inevitable absence of detailed planning papers, it is clear from the actions of all major participants that they generally had a good instinctive grasp of strategy, and what was required to put those strategies into action. By and large, the commanders and administrators of those armies were not stupid. They knew what worked and what did not. Everyone knew that there were two particularly effective troop types. One was the highly trained, heavily equipped and well-motivated close-order cavalry (such as the Frankish knights), capable of charging into the centre of an enemy army and, if successful, ending a battle in minutes. The other was the nomadic horse archers from the steppes (the Turkic light cavalry), similarly well motivated and able to wear down their opponents with their mobility and archery before moving in for the kill.

Even the Fatimid Egyptian army, usually the weakest link in regional military matters, correctly identified the problems it needed to address and tried to resolve them as best it could. There were few illusions about what was required and the Fatimid high command knew that the best troops on the contemporary battlefield were heavy cavalry and Turkic horse archers. It was not feasible for them to recruit Frankish knights, so they tried to do the next best thing: create an elite heavy cavalry component using professional close-order Armenian horsemen. In practice, they were never able to match the Frankish knights in combat, but it was not for lack of trying. Similarly, there was a continual quest to get nomadic horse archers into the army, either as individual units or as allied contingents. As we shall see, these recruitment efforts generally failed, mainly for geopolitical reasons, and the Egyptian army was forced to use large numbers of much less effective Arab and Bedouin light cavalry instead. But the strategic intent was sound. Failure was due to unavoidable circumstances and a lack of resources, rather than stupidity.[18]

Similarly, the Franks knew what needed to be done, even when circumstances meant that they were unlikely to be able to arrive at an entirely satisfactory solution. They developed their own cadre of light horse archers, recruiting large numbers of what became known as ‘Turcopoles’ to compete with the nomads in Muslim employ. They were never as good on the battlefield as their Turkic counterparts, but they were the best the Franks could do under the circumstances and, like the Egyptians, their failings were the consequence of a lack of availability rather than a lack of intelligence or insight.[19]

Even beyond trying to acquire the best soldiers, most generals knew what quality looked like and were well aware of what they needed to do to get it. All the major armies of the period tried to adapt to the changing conditions of warfare and to make qualitative

improvements accordingly.

The Fatimids put training programmes in place to improve their heavy cavalry: these were not successful, largely because of political interference and unhelpful social factors, but the objectives were correct and their commanders clearly knew what needed to happen. The Franks took steps to professionalise their army through the establishment of the military orders and rolling out the best practice that they developed across other parts of the army. Similarly, Saladin's new armies of the 1170s and 1180s saw increasing efforts to improve the quality of the regular troops, the 'askar, enabling them (in theory, at least) to better face the Frankish knights in close combat.

None of these enhancements were entirely successful, but it was not for any lack of strategic direction. The problem was always that systemic or resourcing constraints hindered attempts to make improvements, not that commanders had failed to identify what was necessary.

As the intensity of conflict increased in the course of the twelfth century, so entirely rational efforts were made to ramp up the size, as well as quality, of the forces available. Again, these efforts did not always succeed, but that was usually because of more fundamental issues around geography and demography. The Fatimids, for instance, made continual efforts to recruit more men, importing African slaves and Armenian mercenaries. Similarly, the crusaders strained every sinew to increase the numbers of men available for the field army and, within the constraints of the time, did a good job in doing so. The military orders harnessed resources from Europe, mercenaries were brought in from across the region: towns, settlers and local communities all made their contribution. The manpower issues were addressed as actively as possible given the circumstances. Again, it was never enough, but it was not for any lack of effort or understanding.[20]

We will return to these themes later, but before we do so it is perhaps worth considering the nature of the primary strategic and tactical issues faced by the crusaders and the Christian states they established in the Middle East from 1099 onwards. These were the problems that dictated the way crusader armies developed.

Strategy

Some stricter definitions of the word would suggest that it is not possible to talk of 'strategy' until the mid-eighteenth century. But this is perhaps to be too harsh. As we shall see throughout this study, the direction of warfare in the Middle East during the twelfth century was generally conducted in a serious and intelligent way, almost always in the face of severe practical difficulties. There were inevitable

exceptions. Medieval warfare was brutal, and some leaders, such as Il-Ghazi, were indeed brutalised by the process. Others failed to live up to the challenge of command (Guy of Lusignan and some of the Fatimid generals spring to mind). But given the limited resources available, and the huge communications difficulties, it is perhaps more surprising that most participants performed as well as they did. They were not all military geniuses, but neither were they incompetents or amateurs, and most deserve our respect.

From a strategic perspective there were two related issues facing the Franks, both of them initially bad and, as the century progressed, getting significantly worse. The first was that the crusader states were almost entirely surrounded. The Mediterranean seaboard provided a fragile lifeline back to Europe, but even that took time to fully subdue: Tyre remained in Muslim hands until 1124 and the Fatimid fortress and military base of Ascalon did not fall to the Franks until 1153. The situation on the inland borders was even worse. Egypt, to the south, was controlled by the Shi'ite Muslim Fatimid dynasty. To the north and in the east, Syria and Mesopotamia were ruled by a patchwork of hostile Turkic warlords.

To make matters more difficult, most of the frontier zones of the crusader states lacked natural defensible features, or, in some cases, natural borders of any kind. East of the Euphrates, the County of Edessa had no obvious boundaries whatsoever. Large parts of the County of Tripoli were always susceptible to rapid incursions from the local Muslim states. The Golan Heights and the area east of the Jordan were always potentially vulnerable flashpoints for the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Most crusader territory was in a relatively thin strip of land along the coast of Palestine and Syria. This made it permanently vulnerable to attacks by enemy cavalry, and any idea of a 'defence in depth' was unfeasible. Castles, with their limited garrisons, could help in the defence of particular regions but, in an era before long-range artillery, they could never 'control' a road or valley in the glib way that military historians sometimes suggest. Though the crusaders had, in theory at least, the advantage of interior lines, being surrounded meant that they were always going to be vulnerable to multiple attacks, launched simultaneously on different fronts.[21]

The issue of being permanently surrounded was compounded by the other major strategic problem facing the crusaders: manpower. As we shall see, there were never enough recruits for the Frankish armies, despite the huge efforts that were made to fill the ranks. For the Muslims this was always a different matter. The Egyptians had a centralised state and sufficient funds to raise a massive permanent army. Further north, the different Muslim states in Syria all had their own core of regular troops, their 'askars, and could call on vast

numbers of local townspeople and villagers when on the defensive. Most importantly of all, however, was the access they had to an almost inexhaustible supply of steppe nomads, superb mounted archers, infiltrating down into the region in small groups or, if offered sufficient inducements, even as entire tribes.[22]

The Muslims would almost always be able to bring far greater numbers to bear. And in the case of the Turkic nomads they were able to hire, they had quality as well as quantity on their side. Initially, the main factor which favoured the Franks, and which was the reason why the First Crusade succeeded, was the endemic rivalry between the different Muslim states. At the beginning of the twelfth century, local Syrian warlords were far more likely to see their Muslim neighbours as threats rather than potential allies. The crusaders were just another entrant into an already overcrowded and intensely competitive political environment. As long as this remained the case, crusader armies would still be outnumbered but, in the absence of coordinated attacks, they could deal with their enemies in a piecemeal way.

Over time, however, this inevitably changed. Zengi, the Turkic ruler of Mosul, emerged as a Muslim strongman in the 1130s and 1140s, gradually establishing a larger power base in northern Syria, the expansion culminating in the capture of Edessa, the first Frankish capital to fall. His son Nur al-Din continued the good work, eventually forcing Damascus to join his new empire and sending his generals to capture Egypt. And after Nur al-Din's death, Saladin was able to push the process of Muslim unification still further forward, creating a new Sunni super-state, the Ayyubid empire, that stretched from North Africa and Yemen, up to Mesopotamia via Egypt and Syria. The geographical and strategic isolation of the crusader states was almost complete.

The Franks did not just sit by and watch this happen. They were acutely aware that their interests lay in a fragmented Muslim power structure in the region. They did everything they could to prevent the gradual process of unification, generally supporting weaker Syrian warlords against their fellow Muslims. They even launched a series of very determined attempts to capture or neutralise Egypt, to prevent it becoming part of a larger Muslim polity. The problem for the crusader states was not any lack of strategic understanding, but rather a lack of resources to put their strategic intent into practice.[23]

The corollary of increasing Muslim unity was far more than just a tightening of the geographical isolation of the crusader states. As the size of the Muslim states grew, so did their access to resources. Those resources created an ability to attract and retain increasing numbers of nomadic cavalry, and even build permanent cadres of specialist troops such as artillerists and miners from Khurasan and Aleppo. As

the Franks found themselves more and more surrounded over time, they were also facing increasingly large Muslim armies, many containing troops of excellent quality.[24]

In the long term the disparity in local resourcing was irreversible. It was almost impossible for the Franks to win. The central issue with crusader armies was not that they were employing the wrong strategy. They were a highly militarised society, honed and motivated to a fine point by the threat of imminent extinction. Their leaders, by and large, were thoughtful, energetic and effective generals. They had to be. They could form new alliances, perhaps with the Byzantines, or the Sicilian Normans.[25] And they could improve their armies and fortifications. But with the limitations of the assets available to them and the overwhelming nature of the demographic and geopolitical problems they were facing, there was no long-term approach that could deliver success.

They were fighting war at an intensity unknown to their European contemporaries, total war, for decade after decade. It was a war that they were unlikely to win. Every major victory on the battlefield was only a temporary setback for their Muslim opponents. But every Frankish defeat brought with it the threat of complete annihilation. Military activity was inevitable and unceasing, but the downside of defeat was always disproportionately far worse than any upside that could be gained from victory in the field.

Tactics

The strategic dilemma of how to cope with an enemy who encircled you and was able to field far larger forces, was mirrored on the battlefield. The tactical dilemma facing the Frankish armies was a microcosm of this same strategic threat.

Once two armies were facing each other on the battlefield, or were manoeuvring for advantage on campaign, the Franks were faced with two interlocking tactical problems. First, a predominance of cavalry in Syrian Muslim armies (particularly when they were on the offensive) meant that they had a level of manoeuvrability and flexibility unheard of in western Europe since the days of the late Roman empire. The presence of large numbers of Turkic horse archers meant that a slower, heavier European army could be quickly outflanked and surrounded. The fact that the Muslim armies almost invariably outnumbered the Franks compounded the issue and made their envelopment all the more likely.[26]

Looking again at the example of the battle of the Field of Blood, we can see how that theoretical tactical problem might be played out in practice, and the appalling consequences of failing to solve it. Finding themselves outnumbered and increasingly surrounded, Prince

Roger and his men tried to punch their way through. They launched a series of well-coordinated and ferocious attacks against the Turkic units to their front, putting them to flight. But the retreating Muslim troops were soon met by successive waves of reinforcements coming up behind them and were able to regroup. The Frankish knights had no such luxury.

Walter and other survivors of the Antiochene high command had plenty of time to debate what went wrong while they were in captivity in Aleppo. They correctly identified this moment in the battle as the turning point. They knew that their last chance of success vanished when the Muslims in front of the vanguard 're-mustered their forces and were not afraid to attack our men, but, falling upon them again with spears, lances and arrows . . . they assaulted them violently'.[27]

They were wracked with guilt that perhaps they could have done more, that they could have pushed harder, that they could have broken the enemy if they had only applied more effort. As Walter later wrote, 'because our men failed to carry through with force, as was necessary, many from both the one line and the other suffered destruction'.[28] He was being too harsh. The charge succeeded against the troops it connected with, and had even put to flight some of those on its flanks. But it could not gainsay the vast numbers of Muslim troops that were continually entering the sides of the battlefield, and from behind the Frankish ranks.

This basic tactical problem, how to control the battlefield in the face of an enemy who both outnumbered and surrounded you, was exacerbated by the nature of much of the Syrian Muslim mounted arm. Some of the more regular cavalry of the Syrian 'askars were armoured, not as heavily as a Frankish knight, but armoured nonetheless and less manoeuvrable as a result. The mass of the Turkic-Syrian cavalry were light horse archers, however, and even the more regular troops were trained with the bow. The volume of projectiles that could be launched at a crusader army was huge. For a European force, relatively heavily armoured but dependent on elite cavalry riding largely unprotected horses, the convergence of these factors could be disorientating and potentially disastrous. All things being equal, there was always a strong possibility that a Frankish force would be surrounded and badly shot up before its small band of knights could deliver a battle-winning charge.[29]

The crusader response to this extremely difficult tactical problem was surprisingly subtle and relied on improving three key aspects of their performance: manoeuvrability, discipline and interdependence. Manoeuvrability was needed to counter the much greater flexibility of their Muslim opponents. Discipline was needed to ensure that the all-

important knightly charge was delivered at the optimum time. And a finely honed interdependence was vital to ensure that the infantry and mounted arms offered each other effective protection, however severe the provocation to break ranks.

Manoeuvrability was the hardest of these to achieve, and in practice a compromise was probably the best that could be hoped for. Large numbers of native light cavalry archers, the Turcopoles, were recruited. Initially, the expectation was that these troops would operate semi-independently and be able to keep the hostile Turkic cavalry at bay. While they protected the flanks, the heavy cavalry would be free to charge in to deliver the coup de grâce to the Muslim commanders and their elite troops in the centre of the enemy line. This battlefield role for Christian light cavalry was played out in two large battles, at Tell Danith in 1115 and Ager Sanguinis in 1119. As we shall see in more detail later, on both occasions the performance of the Frankish horse archers was poor and ended in failure. After the complete disaster that followed their rout in 1119, the experiment was shelved. It was recognised that the Turcopoles, outnumbered and outmatched, were being asked to fight a battle they could not win.

But the problem of how to maintain manoeuvrability in the face of a more flexible and more numerous enemy would not go away and could not be ignored. The solution, quite sensibly, was to increase the number of Turcopoles, but to lower expectations as to what they could achieve. Large units of native light horse continued to be recruited, and on an operational level they did much to sustain the agility of the Frankish army.[30]

The issue of manoeuvrability was never resolved satisfactorily and, given the imbalance of resources, it is hard to see how it ever could have been. The crusaders adapted quickly, however, recruiting troops to at least maintain their strategic and operational flexibility, while at the same time recognising that complete parity of manoeuvrability with large groups of nomadic horse archers on the battlefield was always going to be impossible.

Manoeuvrability was largely about trying to negate an enemy's advantage. Discipline, on the other hand, was more about maximising an inherent strength which Frankish armies possessed. The cutting edge of a crusader army was its knights, and its battle-winning technique was their charge. This was just as true in western Europe as it was for a Frankish army in the Middle East. The big difference, however, was that a knightly charge in Europe was unlikely to be surrounded and harassed before the attack was launched. And it was even less likely to have taken substantial casualties, particularly to its horses, from archery fire on the way in. An ill-timed charge was always going to be less effective, but against other European forces,

the enemy were extremely unlikely to be able to evade it. In Europe the training needed to launch a highly disciplined and cohesive charge was very limited, but it was also less essential. Even a relatively uncoordinated charge against a static enemy could be decisive.

The crusader states and their armies had no such tactical luxuries and far more limited scope to make mistakes. Despite much greater provocation and disruption, they needed to ensure that their charge went into the right part of the enemy line, and at exactly the right time. They adapted quickly to try to ensure that a much greater level of discipline imbued every aspect of their cavalry charges: how the men formed up, how the lines were protected, and how the command structure could be put in place to ensure that signals were clear and, more importantly, obeyed.[31]

Training and the establishment of the codes of best practice to create a disciplined army were easier to achieve in Outremer, as necessity created a far more militarised society. The military orders, the Templars and the Hospitallers, provided a core of professionalism, an example to be followed by the secular knights. And the unremitting rigours of campaigning meant that everyone had an unprecedented level of experience of fighting alongside their comrades. Crusader knights may have a reputation for being fractious, but, ironically, on the battlefield they were far more disciplined than their counterparts in Europe. This was partly because they had the training to ensure they could be, and partly because they needed to be.

The other key to success on the battlefield, or to the survivability of a Frankish column on the march, lay in creating a far greater degree of effective interdependency than was shown by armies in the west. Infantry were the Cinderella arm of battle in Europe: present but undervalued, full of potential but playing a minor role relative to their mounted social superiors.

The Turkic horse archer changed all that. European armies operating in the east could not survive without good infantry. The archery of nomadic cavalry was extremely dangerous, killing the precious knightly warhorses before a coordinated charge could be launched. In the east, unlike Europe, infantry needed to be deployed in front of the army to keep the enemy away from the knights until the last possible moment.

The presence of those same nomadic light cavalry meant that infantry equipment had to be upgraded too. They needed crossbows, to keep the enemy horses at bay and to ensure their shooting took place at such a long range that the penetrative power of enemy arrows was much reduced. And the infantry needed better defensive equipment to protect themselves from that same long-range archery. The heavy cavalry was the potentially battle-winning component

whose charge gave the entire Frankish army a chance of success. The infantry provided the protection the cavalry needed to get them to that point.[32]

Whether in a set-piece battle or on the march, this emphasis on interdependency was in evidence. Even relatively minor and little-known crusader actions show just how vital this discipline was, and how well it could work in practice. On 12 November 1190, for example, a crusader force set off on a march out from the siege of Acre to gather fresh supplies. Baha' al-Din described the Franks as 'being heavily engaged from all sides, in fact, hard pressed from every direction but the river . . . They had formed their infantry into a wall, loosing a hail of bolts and arrows. No-one could reach them except with arrows, which were flying over them like locusts. Their cavalry made their way in the centre, with the result that on that day not one of them was to be seen.'[33] The expedition turned out to be ineffectual, just a minor footnote in the military history of the crusades, but even this relatively commonplace and uneventful march showed how Frankish forces could survive in an environment where their enemies were usually more manoeuvrable and more numerous.

Doing More, and Doing It Better

The crusaders' crash course in military adaptation went way beyond improvements to strategy and tactics. Every ounce of military capacity needed to be extracted from the resources available.

If Frankish armies became more effective than their counterparts in Europe, these changes were driven by necessity, often desperation. It is worth looking at these developments in more detail, because it is in the differences between the armies of Outremer and those of western Europe, rather than in the more obvious similarities, that we see how crusading warfare as a whole took on its own unique characteristics. These changes were both qualitative (how the armies were structured and deployed, how their battlefield roles and capabilities changed), as well as quantitative.

Doing Better: Qualitative Adaptation

Massive qualitative changes were essential from the very earliest days of the Frankish presence in the Holy Land. The armies of the First Crusade were entering strange and foreign territory when they reached Asia Minor but it is important to remember that the Turkic troops they encountered were not entirely unfamiliar to them. The process of trying to develop effective ways to counter their very distinctive style of warfare probably started much sooner than is generally imagined.

Certainly there had been earlier contacts with the Turkic peoples who were increasingly encroaching on the region. And there was an awareness, at least in a general sense, of the differing nature of the tactical problems that warfare with nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples might bring with them. Commercial and trading ties with the region brought news back to the west. The Amalfitans and Venetians, for instance, both had extensive trading links with the Fatimid and Byzantine empires. Most importantly, there were military links to the area through the use of Norman and other Frankish warriors as mercenaries serving in the second half of the eleventh century in the Byzantine army, as they tried to stem Muslim attacks into Asia Minor. There were Franks fighting on the Christian side at the pivotal battle of Manzikert in 1071, for instance, and their exploits were reported in western chronicles of the time. One of the Franks captured at Manzikert, Roussel of Bailleul, even attempted to carve out his own principality in Galatia in a curiously prescient foreshadowing of the later crusader states, and western audiences could become aware of his extraordinarily ambitious exploits through chronicles or the tales of men returning home.[34]

There were particularly strong links between the County of Flanders and the Holy Land. Count Robert I had been on pilgrimage to Palestine in 1087–90, and his trip included a visit to Byzantium. The Emperor Alexius had asked him to supply troops to help fight the Turkic invaders and Robert eventually sent 500 men to serve on the frontiers. These troops, and others serving against the Turkic tribes, learned the hard way about the dangers of fighting nomads, and had direct experience of the tactical counter-measures that their Byzantine employers developed to face them. This may only have constituted a very small cadre of men experienced in Turkic fighting techniques, but at least it gave the crusaders some advance warning of what they might expect. It allowed the western commanders to start thinking about how they might develop counter-measures, how to protect the flanks and rear of powerful but relatively cumbersome European armies, and how to develop a light cavalry force of their own.[35]

Infantry had never been prioritised in the medieval west, despite the many geographical advantages that the region gave them. Social hierarchies inevitably meant that investment was heavily skewed towards the battlefield domination and protection of the social elite. Knights wore hugely expensive armour, and needed horses to transport them. Infantry protection was not a priority. Investment in crossbows, with the penetrative power to take down the far more expensive and socially superior knightly cavalry, was discouraged. As we later find with delays in the introduction of the machine gun in the nineteenth century, however vicious warfare could be, there was often

an unspoken element of socially aligned self-interest: both sides wanted to maintain the status quo that kept knights at the top of the military hierarchy. Innovation and investment might upset that balance: putting more crossbows and better armoured infantry on the battlefield was never going to be a priority for a cavalry general.

Conditions in the east were always different. Social empathy between the Frankish knights and their main cavalry opponents, the nomadic Turkic light cavalry and their second- or third-generation descendants fighting in the 'askars of Muslim Syria, was far slighter. The occasional empathy displayed by Usama in his dealings with his neighbouring Frankish lords (ambiguous and marred by bigotry as it often was) is frequently mentioned as an example of social solidarity across the cultures. That is to miss the point, however. He was not a Turk: Usama and his family were almost unique in being Arab aristocrats in a Muslim world run by men of Turkic descent, and even they survived in power only for a relatively short time. This was a war of different cultures and ideologies, of Christian against Muslim, but there was also a mismatch on a far more fundamental level: sedentary societies facing nomadic or nomadic-heritage opponents, with a much lower level of empathy between the belligerents as a result.[36]

The increased role and importance of the infantry was one of the main beneficial consequences of this loosening of considerations of social class. Investment was increasingly channelled where it was needed most, regardless of social standing. A major part of that investment was needed to enhance the capabilities of the Frankish infantry, to help counter the impact of Turkic archery: keeping the enemy cavalry as far away as possible from the Frankish lines (and particularly from the Frankish horses) until the optimum moment for the knightly charge appeared.

By the 1180s, Saladin was paying the more professional Frankish infantry the highest, albeit unwelcome, compliment. He often used to single out the Christian troops he feared most for special punishment. When the prisoners of war from the capture of the castle at Jacob's Ford were gathered in front of him, he had the Templar knights killed but also, far more unexpectedly, the crossbowmen, as they had caused him most difficulty.[37] The nature of the evidence makes it hard to prove definitively, but one gets a clear sense that, at least among the more 'regular' infantry (the permanent garrisons, the professional mercenaries and so on), their role, equipment and effectiveness were all enhanced over the course of the twelfth century. And indeed, given the intense and endemic levels of warfare in the region, it would be strange if that were not the case.

Even the knights, ostensibly the most conservative element of a crusader army, were subject to major change. The heavily armoured

cavalry that dominated the battlefields and courts of Europe were experts in the use of arms and in the skills that marked them out as members of a warrior elite. But they were individualists, and these were essentially individual qualities. Their virtues were those endorsed by social class (personal bravery, loyalty to one's lord, and so on), rather than the attributes one would normally associate with a more strictly professional approach to military affairs (such as discipline or manoeuvrability as a unit).

This focus on individualism was encouraged by social norms but in some respects it was also made inevitable by geography. In Europe, most of a feudal host would be spread across many small estates. Individuals or small retinues might know each other socially but the chance to operate together as units, or to train for any larger manoeuvres, was extremely rare. The focus was on personal skills in the absence of opportunities for military training on a higher level.[38]

This was far less the case in the crusader states. It is true that the Frankish nobility were just as prone to arrogance and wilfulness as their European counterparts, and they shared a natural appreciation of the individual's martial skills. Likewise, their lands tended to be scattered, and many, particularly those with lordships on the frontiers, had to keep much of their retinue in isolated garrisons.

But there were also significant differences, driven, as was so often the case, by necessity and desperation rather than any desire to break social conventions. The sustained intensity of crusading warfare and the precarious nature of the military and political situation meant that the knights of Outremer had no alternative but to campaign and practise the art of war together, on a scale unheard of in Europe. Like it or not, the retinues of the Latin East had a surfeit of opportunities to train as units and as armies and, month after month, year after year, to put that training into practice. Indeed, the demands of active campaigning meant that training probably became less and less necessary over time. Most Frankish armies were small in number, but composed of veterans who knew their trade and their enemy extremely well. Although the emotional pull of knightly individualism was always there, crusader armies knew that the logic of discipline and restraint in manoeuvrability was vital for their survival.

As we have seen, the single most important military problem facing the Franks was how to counter the large numbers of light cavalry that their Muslim enemies were able to deploy. Although there were mounted squires and less heavily armoured cavalry in western Europe, there was no significant 'light cavalry' arm. The Frankish knights were superb in close combat but they lacked manoeuvrability and were never available in large numbers. Their ranks could be bolstered by squires or mounted sergeants, but they too were rarely

sufficient, and never as fast or as flexible as their Turkic opponents.

A vital adaptation by the Frankish armies was the development of their own 'light cavalry' arm, the Turcopoles, following the example of the Byzantine armies they had encountered in Asia Minor.[39] And, beyond the Turcopoles, other native troops, primarily local Christians, were used extensively. Maronites for fighting in the mountains and valleys of Tripoli, Armenians in a wide range of roles, local Orthodox Christians as required and as available. The widespread introduction of Turcopoles and other local troops added an element of flexibility and adaptability into Frankish armies that was unknown in the west. The heavy troops were better disciplined and more cohesive than their western equivalents, while the lighter troops added a level of support necessary to make this a much more rounded army, capable of operating flexibly and with the depth to absorb punishment or exploit success.

The establishment of the military orders was another innovation from the Latin East that helped to push forward the pace of change in medieval warfare. In an era where standing armies were a rarity and military discipline was in short supply, the Templars and Hospitallers helped to embed best practice into the army as a whole. They contributed the core of a standing army and a degree of professionalism that was virtually unknown in the west.[40]

It was not a coincidence, for instance, that it was the military orders who had the honour and responsibility of spearheading the Frankish attack at the battle of Mont Gisard in 1177. Significantly outnumbered, everyone knew that the Christian army had only one opportunity to charge, and that charge needed to be a success. The Templars led the assault, aggressively focused on the person of Saladin and his family, surrounded by their 'askar. Ralph of Diss, writing in London, probably using information from one of the Templar newsletters that circulated in the west or from a returning pilgrim, explicitly tells us that it was a Templar charge into the Muslim battle lines that won the day. The Master of the Templars:

> had eighty-four knights of his Order with him in his personal company. He took himself into battle with his men . . . Spurring all together, as one man, they made a charge, turning neither to the left nor to the right. Recognising the body of troops in which Saladin commanded many knights, they manfully approached it, immediately penetrated it, incessantly knocked down, scattered, struck and crushed.[41]

The headlong assault of the Frankish heavy cavalry had a traumatic impact on the Muslim lines. One of the knights, probably a Templar from the Frankish centre division, even got within reach of Saladin himself. He was eventually brought down by bodyguards from the 'askar, and the visibly shaken Saladin was hustled from the

battlefield before any more of the Franks had a chance to get to him.[42]

And it was not just by example on the battlefield that the Templars and Hospitallers were able to promote best practice. By taking vows of obedience, and training and fighting together over extended periods of time, the military orders were able to develop protocols and discipline uniquely suited to the Middle East. *The Rule of the Templars*, which we shall examine in more detail later, looks and feels recognisably like a military manual. Rarely since the collapse of the classical world had western armies even aspired to such a degree of professionalism.[43]

That professionalism did not stop at making qualitative improvements to the way in which the crusader armies operated. The military orders were not just making Frankish troops better at what they already did. They used the flexibility provided by this new professionalism to change the way in which war was waged in the Holy Land, and to ensure that warfare adapted as effectively as possible to local conditions.

The role of the military orders should not be exaggerated. They were never a fully 'professional' or 'standing' army in a modern sense. And the best of the Frankish knights and nobility were experienced and effective commanders in their own right. But the resources and focus of the new warrior monks allowed them to take a longer view, and, on a good day, rise above the exigencies of local issues. For the first time, Frankish troops had the opportunity to standardise and implement best practice across large bodies of men: they could regularise the tactics that worked best, and, by their example, gradually introduce them into the feudal host as a whole.

It is hard to be definitive about key points in time when innovations by the Templars and Hospitallers were put into practice: with the partial exception of *The Rule of the Templars* (which deals with tactics rather than strategy), there are no surviving planning papers. But whenever we see military innovation we find the Templars and Hospitallers at the forefront of change. When the radical new castles of the 1170s were being built, it was the military orders who took the lead. As Turcopoles were being developed as a partial answer to the problem of how to deal with clouds of enemy light cavalry, it was again the military orders who were in the forefront, regularising their deployment and placing them, under senior 'Turcopolier' officers, in the heart of the Frankish military. And, as the widespread integration of professional crossbowmen into Frankish armies took place during the course of the twelfth century, so the military orders became large-scale employers of their services.[44]

Whenever a determined and coordinated charge was called for, the Templars and Hospitallers were the prime candidates to lead the way, combining unit cohesiveness with bravery and an aggressive spirit.

Ironically, given their supposed fanaticism, whenever restraint was most called for, the military orders were there also. Command of the tail end of a fighting column, always the most dangerous position and the one most susceptible to severe provocation, came to be given almost invariably to the military orders.[45]

Military architecture also made major leaps forward in the east. There were significant qualitative differences between the castles developed in the crusader states and those the settlers had left behind. Castles in Europe were important in the twelfth century, but were rarely subjected to anything like the military pressure of their counterparts in Outremer. In a rural economy, where economic surplus was largely expressed by labour or payment in kind, the fortified places of Europe were generally defensible residences, where the local lord and his retinue could live for a while, at the expense of local villagers. And when that was no longer possible, they would move on to the next village. Even kings and their courts operated in this way for centuries. Castles were expressions of military strength and power, but the huge expense of turning them into invulnerable fortresses was rarely justified and even more rarely undertaken. The later frontier castles of Outremer were thoroughbreds by comparison, far more sophisticated and, as we shall see, they set an entirely new standard of professionalism in defensive architecture.[46]

Doing More: Quantitative Adaptation

No amount of qualitative enhancement could entirely solve their problems, however. On a good day, Frankish knights might be excellent soldiers, but the more fundamental issue was always quantitative. Christian armies were almost invariably heavily outnumbered, and particularly so in terms of their cavalry. The size of the Muslim states opposing them increased dramatically during the course of the twelfth century. As we have seen, Syria gradually moved towards consolidation in larger political units, first under Zengi and later under Nur al-Din and Saladin. Greater resources meant larger armies. The crusaders always found it hard to compete.

This was well recognised by the Franks, and they made great strides in increasing the size of their forces. They also made significant exertions to improve the flow of money that kept castles and garrisons provisioned and large, well-equipped armies in the field.

But the odds were stacked against them. The loss of a Frankish field army was a catastrophe. For their Muslim enemies, the loss of an army was generally little more than a setback. By the mid-twelfth century the only long-term chance of success for the Franks was if a series of Muslim strongmen succumbed to illness or tragic accidents and the fragile unity of the Muslim states collapsed in the aftermath of

their deaths.

It almost happened. Saladin's health was extremely poor at certain points in the 1180s and he had a couple of close brushes with the Assassins.[47] But he survived, and even if he had died, someone else would eventually have taken his place. In the absence of political change on the Muslim side, the Franks could do little but to try to keep up as best they could, fielding as many troops as possible.

As in so many aspects of life, desperation and cash were at the root of the answer. One of the advantages enjoyed by the crusaders was that they were now operating in a region which had a far more sophisticated economy than that to which they were accustomed. The large towns and cities of the classical eastern Mediterranean had operated under Hellenistic, and later, Roman control for almost a thousand years before the Muslim invasions. They had been vibrant economic and cultural centres. Even now, their geographical position at the western end of the Eurasian Silk Roads created a continuing flow of opportunities for trade and commercial activity. Although the towns of Palestine and Syria had been in decline for several centuries, and were in many ways just a shadow of how they had been at their classical peak, the Muslim invaders had inherited a far more sophisticated regional economic structure than anything that was available in, say, France, Germany or the British Isles.[48]

In particular, bringing the coastal towns back under Christian control gave the Franks access to a monetary economy, and with that money they had far more flexibility to improve both the quality and quantity of their armies. Of course, just as there were never enough men, so there was never enough money. The kings of Jerusalem were often berated by ecclesiastical chroniclers for their 'greed' and 'grasping' policies. To a modern observer it is obvious that they were just perennially short of money to pay for troops and fortifications. But at least there was the possibility of money, with all the potential for increased flexibility that it brought to the military system. As the crusaders bedded themselves in and the stability of their rule was established, so the coastal towns and cities quickly became more prosperous.[49]

Quite beyond the gradual increase in economic activity in the crusader states, however, the dictates of an increasingly 'total' war created the need for radical financial solutions. Financing was always an issue, and an inevitable source of friction between secular society and the Church, the nobility and the king, the urban centres and the rural hinterlands. By the 1180s, however, with Saladin's grip on the region tightening, the time for bickering was at an end. The different social groups realised that the mutual threat was far more important than their individual self-interests. In February 1183, a General

Council was convened to carry out a census prior to setting up a universal tax levy, or at least as close to 'universal' as a medieval bureaucracy could manage.[50] Everyone, church and state, merchants and peasants, had to contribute. This was radical but not entirely unprecedented. Similar levies had been set up in western Europe before. In 1166 France and England had both imposed a tax in order, significantly, to help support the kingdom of Jerusalem, so we cannot solely blame the crusader states for inventing income tax. But they took the financing of war to a new level.[51]

Money was also gathered from around Europe. The army that Guy of Lusignan squandered at the battle of Hattin in 1187, for instance, was largely funded by King Henry II of England to assuage his guilt about the murder of his old friend, Archbishop Thomas Becket. As well as improving the quality of Frankish armies, the military orders also played a critical role in transferring resources from their estates and contacts in the west.[52] Part of this was in the form of money: and the money transfers which the Hospitallers and Templars made possible went towards maintaining their troops in the field, building the latest fortifications and putting in place the garrisons needed to contest the increasingly untenable frontier zones.

Beyond money, they also imported other military supplies. Laymen in the west who wanted to associate themselves with the military orders, 'confratres', engaged in contracts to provide weapons and horses for the cause.[53] Taking animals as an example, *The Rule of the Templars* makes clear that the number of horses needed far exceeded the men fielded in an army. Knights were allowed three or four horses, and squires and sergeants an additional horse each. Officers had proportionately more, and to this would be added the large number of animals required for the baggage train. Visitors to the east were amazed by the industrial scale of the livery operations run by the Templars in Jerusalem, in itself just one part of their widespread responsibilities and operations. A pilgrim in the 1160s suggested that they had facilities for 2,000 horses in Jerusalem, while a few years later a German traveller said that they could cater for 10,000 horses at any given time. The latter estimate was probably an exaggeration, but the numbers were clearly impressive. The orders were big players in the local markets, but beyond this they were also active importers of horses in their own right.

Men were also in scarce supply, and like the horses, they could either be sourced locally or shipped over from Europe by the Templars and Hospitallers. The exact numbers involved are, as always, unclear, but it appears that by the 1180s the Templars had approximately 600 knights serving in the east, supported by perhaps 2,000 sergeants and a large contingent of Turcopoles. The Hospitallers would have been

able to field broadly comparable numbers. The other big advantage of the military orders was that their organisations back in Europe allowed them to gather reinforcements and replacements in a structured fashion. Unlike the happenstance nature of the crusading groups arriving from the west, there was always the possibility that the Templars and Hospitallers could bring in fresh troops when they were most needed.[54]

As well as supplying brother knights and mercenaries from Europe, the military orders were also able to give individual lay knights the opportunity to fight in the east. These volunteers ('Milites ad Terminum') were given an opportunity to join as temporary partners of the orders, doing military and other work without being bound to the long-term discipline and vows that becoming a monk entailed. Similarly, volunteers were also willing to enrol for defined periods to act as squires or even Turcopoles. These were doubtless acts of piety, perhaps sometimes combined with the desire for adventure. Others felt that they might join fully at a later stage in their lives, perhaps when their families were grown up, and a temporary secondment made it easier to do so. But whatever the motivation, the Templars and Hospitallers provided the logistics to allow individuals in Europe to volunteer for service in the east.[55]

The nobility of the Latin East, even at the highest level, had no such luxuries when it came to reinforcements. There were limited numbers of men and replacing them was not easy. The kings of Jerusalem could do little more than send begging letters back to Europe (which they did regularly) and try to make up the shortfall by hiring such mercenaries as were available or as they could afford.[56]

Part of the manpower issue could be solved by the arrival of crusaders coming to stay temporarily in the east, generally for reasons of piety and a desire to help protect the Holy Land. Individual crusaders from western Europe or larger groups operating as a retinue under the auspices of wealthy nobles were naturally encouraged by the rulers of the Frankish states and made to feel welcome. Although they were there in fulfilment of vows, they could also be put to good work in the defence of the crusader states during their stay. There were often tensions between the requirements of realpolitik and the essentially pacifistic nature of Christianity but many European knights needed little encouragement to participate in what they felt to be a 'just war' in defence of the ancient Christian homelands.

The problem with these volunteers was less about motivation and more about timing. In an emergency the call to arms was made to everyone, pilgrims and crusaders, whether in the ports of Palestine or at their devotions in Jerusalem. But it was entirely coincidental if a large crusader force happened to be in town just when it was most

needed. More often, circumstances were tailored to fit what was available, rather than the other way round, with all the problems that that invariably entailed.

Strategically, it meant that such expeditions were often driven by availability of resources rather than objectives. As large groups of crusaders might only be in the east for a few months, the natural temptation was to try to find a use for them, regardless of longer-term goals. The disastrous attack on Damascus in 1148, for instance, was partially triggered by the temporary presence of French and German soldiers from the Second Crusade, and the desire to find something practical for them to do while they were still in the east.[57] Similarly, in 1157 the presence of Thierry of Alsace, count of Flanders, on armed pilgrimage to the east, caused a flurry of military activity around Tripoli and Antioch. Again, driven by availability rather than strategic purpose, the Franks failed to retake the castle of Chastel Rouge in the County of Tripoli, and the campaign ended in recriminations as an attempt to capture Shaizar petered out too.[58]

If using visiting crusader manpower for strategic purposes was difficult, then there were just as many issues associated with their tactical use. Faced with very different styles of warfare in the east, travellers from the west could not be expected to adapt fully during the few months they were on pilgrimage, and the amateurishness of new arrivals could be an active embarrassment. The poor performance of new (ill-acclimatised and only temporary) crusaders was often repeated during the twelfth century.

The disastrous engagements of the French and German armies on the Second Crusade, as they tried to force their way through Asia Minor, were a masterclass in how not to face a Turkic opponent. In January 1148, a lack of discipline and poor decision-making on the march almost led to the destruction of the French army. In the aftermath of an extraordinary reassessment of their prospects, the small but professional Templar contingent had to be given control of the entire army.[59] Once again the contrast was clear: a shambolic European feudal host was embarrassingly sloppy compared to the far more rigorous approach of men trained in the hardships of the east.

In the face of perennial difficulties in finding fighting men, the Franks had little choice but to stretch all their local resources to the limit. Feudal retinues were called to serve, at home and abroad, time and again. Knights who were disabled or held as prisoners of war were still obliged to find replacements to serve in their stead. Widows, even far beyond childbearing age, were under pressure to remarry to ensure that fighting men could be supported by the revenues of their fiefs. Almost surreally, lepers were encouraged to join their own military order. Hospitaller or Templar knights who contracted leprosy were

required to enter a 'special unit', the knights of St Lazarus, and to carry on fighting for as long as their condition allowed them to.[60] And in an age when life expectancy was far shorter than now, knights were expected to serve on campaign and in the saddle, year after year, until the age of 60. The military pressures were remorseless, and reflected in a huge human cost, both psychological and physical.

These exertions paid off, but only up to a point. On the one hand, the scale of the efforts was truly impressive. By the 1180s the crusader states were capable of fielding armies far larger than the combined forces of France and the German empire. At Hattin in 1187 the kingdom of Jerusalem, with only very limited assistance from the other crusader states, was able to field a force of approximately 20,000 men including some 1,200 or 1,300 knights. By way of comparison, the combined forces of Otto IV, the Holy Roman Emperor and King Philip II of France, when they met at the pivotal battle of Bouvines just a few years later, were only some 15,000–16,000 men.[61]

But this achievement required huge sacrifice: personal sacrifices on the part of the knights and retinues that were called to perform military service for months at a time and across a geographical remit that was almost unthinkable in Europe; financial sacrifices that allowed mercenaries to be recruited and state-of-the art castles to be built and garrisoned; and a sacrifice across all parts of the local Christian community, whether serving as Turcopoles, as infantry or as siege specialists. The exertion needed to reach this point, and to keep at this pitch, was immense. The forces of Saladin's new empire began to invade on an almost annual basis. The unsustainable nature of that supreme effort, and mounting frustration at the never-ending pressure is perhaps part of the reason why the Franks were eventually prepared to behave so recklessly at Hattin, betting everything on a single throw of the dice rather than endure the relentless grind of watching their country being slowly destroyed around them, year after year.[62]

A Different Kind of Army for a Different Kind of War

Ironically, although the forces of the crusader states seem, from a distance, to be the archetypal 'western' armies of the period, closer examination shows that to be far from the case. They were different in almost every respect. Relative to the size of their states, or the size of the population, Frankish armies by the end of the twelfth century in the Holy Land were far bigger and more sophisticated. They were more manoeuvrable, partly because they employed large numbers of light cavalry, giving them a higher degree of operational flexibility. Their infantry were better equipped and deployed more professionally. The knights, and particularly those from the military orders, were aggressive and experienced, but also able to charge in a

coordinated and high-impact way. Above all, they had a level of discipline and cohesion that few European forces could even aspire to. On any field in Europe, this would have been a battle-winning army. The crusader armies of the Latin East were the logical conclusion of the process to extract maximum efficiency from a western medieval army.

The trademark battlefield techniques of the crusader armies were, similarly, not as typical of western Europe as one might think. The cavalry charges were superficially the same but were in fact much better coordinated and better disciplined. Similarly, the infantry were more effective, both in terms of role and performance, than their European equivalents. Far from just reflecting western practice, crusader armies were influential in moving European practice forward. And all of this, the better charge, the enhanced role of the infantry, the massive frontier castles of the 1170s and 1180s, was the response to Turkic cavalry, not to European armies.

As we have seen, the dynamics of crusading warfare were dictated by the rhythm of conflict between sedentary and nomadic or nomadic-heritage societies. One of the consequences of this was the wide level of uncertainty with regard to the possible outcomes of battle. With an opponent from a similar cultural background one had a reasonable understanding of what was possible. But the asymmetrical nature of nomadic–sedentary warfare introduced such a wide range of variables that protagonists were even more wary than usual of risking all on the vagaries of battle. Those uncertainties, and the intensity of the conflict, pushed a pace of military change that was only constrained by what their societies and economies could bear.

None of the armies of the period were quite what they seemed, but all adapted and stretched their resources to the limit, as they desperately tried to keep pace. Far from the glamour of chivalry or the fanaticism of religion, this is the story of the struggle that saw unwashed and unarmoured men on small ponies dictate the evolution of European warfare.

CHAPTER 3

Asymmetry and Intensity

THERE IS A CLOSE link in warfare between the symmetry, or otherwise, of military cultures, the ability to assess risk, and the willingness to accept battle.

Studies of crusading warfare (this one included) inevitably tend to pay a lot of attention to the pitched battles and the campaigns of large armies. There are very good reasons why this should be so. Battles are high profile, politically charged and potentially pivotal in changing the face of the entire region. And the level of interest shown in such things was just as true for contemporary historians as it is for modern ones, so it has the added benefit of ensuring that a great deal of evidence survives about them. All the chronicles cover a large battle, and the military celebrities of the time get a chance to shine, or otherwise, in their pages.

These conflicts were undoubtedly extremely important. But they were only one part of the picture. Even putting garrison duty and siegecraft to one side, the day-to-day warfare experienced by the troops of the period was far different than this emphasis would suggest.

Battles in the Latin East were surprisingly rare, and armies that actively sought them were even rarer. Many of the battles that did take place were accidental or, perhaps more accurately, unplanned. Armies manoeuvred to raid an enemy's territory, to advance to besiege a castle or town, or to relieve one. Battles could develop in such situations, but often in an opportunistic way rather than from a desire to face the enemy, regardless of the consequences. Only when a significant disparity of resources meant that the enemy was likely to be heavily outnumbered (as, for instance, was the case with Saladin's continued attempts to bring the Frankish armies to battle in the late 1170s and 1180s), would battle be sought as an objective in its own right, and even then ideally only if circumstances were favourable.[1]

Battles were dangerous, unpredictable affairs, and the risks

associated with them were significant. And these risks were deeply personal, rather than abstract. Frankish commanders often fought in the front line, or very close to the action: limitations of command and control encouraged it. They fought beside their close friends and relatives, and casualties were almost inevitable. The fear and tension in an army as battle approached was palpable. Veterans of warfare in the region did not undertake it lightly.

Many Frankish leaders were killed or captured in battle. Muslim commanders, with their larger, more mobile armies and lighter armour, were more likely to escape a defeat, but even Saladin was almost killed in battle with the Franks at Mont Gisard. Combat was personal and the consequences of defeat were deeply personal too. For the Christian armies, quite beyond their own lives, the consequences of failure were potentially profound for their families and communities. A catastrophic defeat could mean death, slavery or deportations on a huge scale. Like early proponents of game theory, no one wanted to fight unless they had the odds on their side, or unless they felt they had no other choice.

When armies manoeuvred in the field, the desired effect was, more often than not, to force the enemy to withdraw. Perhaps to lift a siege. Or perhaps to bring an extended raid to a premature close. There were many ways to fight a successful campaign that did not involve entering into all the risks associated with a pitched battle. A positive outcome was often just to leave the enemy with no choice but to 'cease and desist', rather than attempt to wipe out their field army.

So, rather than just looking at the main campaigns and battles, it is also helpful to analyse conflict along the two axes of 'symmetry' and 'intensity'. The 'symmetry' (or otherwise) of military practices, and of the nature of the cultures from which such practices derived, was the main determinant of whether protagonists would actively seek battle in the open field. 'Intensity', on the other hand, reflects the extent to which the conflict involved a large-scale muster, or whether only a relatively small number of local troops were caught up in the fighting. This inevitably had an impact on the stakes being played for (where there was less to lose, there was generally less to gain), but it also affected the style of warfare that could be employed: formations and tactics that made sense when large armies were gathered were not necessarily feasible for small units or raiding parties.

Table 1 sets out examples of the broad matrix of military activity along the two axes of 'symmetry' and 'intensity'. The main focus of historians to date has been on the top left-hand box: the high-profile, high-intensity and asymmetrical battles that provided a pivot for much of the warfare in the period. It is not a coincidence that these were the battles and large-scale campaigns that pitched the two

‘archetypal’ troop types of crusading warfare against each other: the Frankish knights and the Turkic light horse archers. In practice, however, the most ‘typical’ military activity, certainly by volume, was, as we shall see, of low intensity. Moreover, there was a very significant aspect of crusading warfare which was in fact ‘symmetrical’, between two opponents using similar military tactics, who might actively seek battle (in the case of the Fatimid Egyptians) or who had very similar, generally lower-risk, objectives (in the case of the smaller Syrian Muslim states).

	'Asymmetric Warfare'	'Symmetric Warfare'
High-Intensity Warfare	**Highly Asymmetric Fighting** against 'wild' or first-generation Turkic groups: e.g. Tell Danith, 1115 Ager Sanguinis, 1119 **Less Asymmetric Fighting** against 'second generation' Turkic groups with more regularised askars: e.g. Mont Gisard, 1177 Hattin, 1187	**Symmetric Fighting** with Fatimid Egyptians: e.g. Ascalon, 1099 and Ramla/Jaffa in 1101, 1102, 1105, 1123
Low-Intensity Warfare	**Raiding/Criminality/Policing** e.g. attacks on pilgrim groups e.g. attacks on villages, peasants	**Raiding** with Turkic groups: e.g. Galilean frontier with Damascus **Raiding** with Arabic/Turkic groups: e.g. Shaizar **Raiding** with Fatimid forces: e.g. around Ascalon

Table 1 Symmetry and Intensity of Warfare

Asymmetry and Risk Analysis: Battle by Accident or Opportunity

Syria and Palestine in the twelfth century were among the most violent places even at a time when violence was commonplace. There

was the occasional truce, but there was always war. The main protagonists were not shy. The elite groups on both sides, whether Frankish knights or Turkic warlords, held their positions of authority and entitlement in direct relation to their ability to perform effectively as warriors. Entire societies were geared up for war, and that war was conducted with a remorseless and professional ferocity that had no equivalent in contemporary Europe.[2]

And yet, time and time again, we find that these extremely aggressive commanders, leading armies of adrenaline-fuelled warriors, are tentative when embarking on a course of action that might result in a full-scale, pitched battle. This was particularly the case when stakes were high and large bodies of troops from outside the immediate region were available for combat.[3]

This seems extremely counterintuitive. On a tactical level, the Franks were known for their discipline and caution. They were careful, for example, not to follow up too impetuously after Turkic light cavalry: experience had shown them that these retreats were all too often merely a feint to lure their pursuers into an ambush or to encourage them to break formation in the excitement of an overly prolonged charge. Indeed, the Franks themselves sometimes used such tactics, as the Anglo-Saxon infantry found to their cost at Hastings. But although the desire to avoid pitched battles was also often evident in the west, there were particular issues that exacerbated these circumstances in the Middle East and altered decision-making on both sides. This caution requires explanation.

It is no coincidence that, although the Franks were extremely aggressive, two of their three ‘trademark’ tactical formations, the fighting march and the combined-arms shieldwall, were essentially defensive in nature. Even their most defining formation, the knightly charge, differed from standard European practice in being more restrained, better disciplined and better coordinated: essentially trying to hold back the charge until the optimum time to launch it. Nomadic horse archers were dangerous opponents and it was notoriously difficult for an army consisting mainly of infantry and heavy cavalry to pin them down.

Syrian Muslim armies also faced major problems, but of a different kind. A Frankish army was easy to harass but difficult to destroy. The knights could be deadly if they were allowed to come too close, but if the Muslim army was kept too far away, many of the less regular troops would quickly lose interest and start to melt away. The cultural and military mismatch created unique problems for both sides.

Under ‘normal’ circumstances, whether in Europe or the Middle East, the outcomes of battle were, if not predictable, then at least on a spectrum one could easily envisage. When a European army met a

Middle Eastern army from a nomadic heritage, however, the nature of the two forces, each powerful, but in very different ways, meant that the range of possible outcomes was extremely wide. Syrian Muslim armies had lighter, more manoeuvrable troops, usually available in greater numbers, and with horse archery and mobility as their key strengths. The Franks had solid infantry blocks and deadly heavy cavalry that could punch their way through almost any enemy line. Both were powerful, but both had uniquely different strengths. Outnumbering the enemy, or operating on favourable terrain, for instance, was never enough to be able to predict the outcome with confidence, and that is why all parties were wary of battle.

Cultural asymmetry can produce wildly unbalanced confrontations. The most obvious example is the way in which relatively small numbers of Europeans had a vastly disproportionate military impact on the South and Central American societies which they encountered in the early sixteenth century.[4] The deceptive over-familiarity of crusading warfare encourages us to downplay the impact of social asymmetry, but the differences were nonetheless profound, and their effects far-reaching. Turkic and Frankish approaches to warfare were polarised. They had different fighting styles and, in the early days at least, different objectives. They had different troop types, and they had very different tactical capabilities. The arbitrary nature of the potential outcomes that this generated created a reticence on the part of all concerned: few commanders approached campaigning with battle as their primary goal. Where it did happen, the decision to engage in a pitched battle would often be driven by short-term opportunism or accident rather than by long-term design.[5]

Symmetry and Risk Analysis: Battle by Design

On one level, the wars between the Fatimid Egyptians and the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem seem to contradict this broad principle. Here was a Muslim army that was eager to fight the Franks in battle, at least while it had the confidence and strength to do so. For as long as they could field large, viable armies, the Fatimids were keen to meet the Franks in close combat, and the Franks were happy to oblige. High-intensity conflict became an almost annual feature of life in the early days of the southern frontiers of the crusader states. Within the first six years of the foundation of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, there were no fewer than five major battles with the Egyptians and four full-scale Egyptian invasions of Palestine.[6]

In August 1099, the main field armies of both states met outside the walls of Ascalon, resulting in a major defeat for the Fatimid army, but one which they could ascribe to unique factors, such as the element of surprise, or the fact that they were unfamiliar with their

new enemy. By September 1101 the Egyptian army was back, and met the crusaders on the plains nearby (at the first battle of Ramla). They were defeated again, but this time the battle was much harder fought. Their improved performance encouraged the Egyptian army to keep trying and within a few months preparations were in hand for yet another invasion. At the second battle of Ramla, in the middle of May 1102, Egyptian forces destroyed much of the Franks' heavy cavalry and almost succeeded in killing their king, together with most of the nobility. Unfortunately for them another major battle, less than two weeks later and only a few miles away, near Jaffa, resulted in a substantial defeat. The Egyptian army took some time to recover and regroup, and invaded yet again in the summer of 1105. The ensuing battle took place in the same area (the third battle of Ramla), and again resulted in a demoralising defeat for the Fatimid military.[7]

These five battles, fought in quick succession, have an almost ritualistic quality to them. They were timed to be equally suitable for both parties, in the middle of the traditional campaigning season (all took place between mid-May and early September). Even the venues were similar, with the battles playing out on the coastal plain between Ascalon and Jaffa, on flat terrain that suited both parties, and mostly within a few kilometres of each other. It was like two boxers meeting time after time. They had different promoters, but they were both happy to keep facing each other in the same ring, fighting to the same rules.

In fact, the behaviour of the Fatimid army was neither the exception to the concept of 'asymmetric' warfare, nor even the exception that proves the rule. The main reason for their willingness to meet in battle, of course, was that the modes of warfare employed by the two protagonists, Fatimids and Franks, were so similar. The style of fighting was so symmetrical that commanders on each side were prepared to face each other in battle. There were always winners and losers, but the range of possible outcomes was never so dispersed as to discourage the attempt to meet. The outcome of the battles eventually demonstrated that the Franks were, all things being equal, generally better at the mode of fighting that they were both accustomed to, but each could understand the other's style of warfare perfectly well.

Both Fatimids and Franks used light troops on their flanks, and occasionally threw them out in front of the main armies. But the heart of both armies lay in their heavy cavalry, primarily armed with lance and shield, and with blocks of close-order infantry, armed with spears and shield or bows. Like the Franks, the Egyptians had very few Turkic light horse archers. The light cavalry they did use were mostly armed with javelins and shields. The fluid archery of the steppes was

nowhere to be found. So although there were, of course, differences between the two armies, the styles of warfare that they employed were broadly symmetrical.[8]

And the reason why the scope of military action was so similar was because culturally the Fatimids and the Franks had far more in common than their (nominally) different religions would suggest. Like the Frankish troops, the Fatimid army was the product of a sedentary society, fighting in the way that such societies tend to do. The seemingly endless battles in southern Palestine at the beginning of the twelfth century were those of two settled communities squaring off against each other, rather than a sedentary society facing nomads in a dangerously asymmetric gamble.

The Equilibrium of Low-Intensity Combat

As we have seen, chroniclers tended to focus on high-profile, high-intensity military activity and the military elite who took part in it. Modern historians tend to follow their example because, entirely understandably but with its own circular logic, that is where most of the evidence comes from. In practice, however, most soldiers were not celebrities, most military actions were low-intensity skirmishes, and the average military experience was more akin to a cattle raid or a fight between rival groups of heavily armed soccer fans than the last stand of the Spartans at Thermopylae.

The vast majority of actions were small battles or skirmishes between elements of the ‘askar of a particular area and the household troops of the local Frankish lord. It did not always feel like it to the participants, but this was what we might call today ‘low-intensity’ combat. The number of casualties was small, the fighting was fluid rather than fixed, and men were generally willing to give ground quickly rather than fight in close combat for any extended period of time.[9]

The fighting would generally involve military activity within a specific region (often two adjoining zones of influence), primarily calling on local troops. From a Frankish perspective this meant that low-intensity fighting did not usually involve the presence of large numbers of crusading soldiers from Europe (who occasionally made the trip to the east on pilgrimage and wanted to offer military assistance to their co-religionists while they were there). Similarly, it would tend to preclude combat that was so serious that help was required from other crusader states (for example, the Principality of Antioch asking for military aid from the king of Jerusalem).

On the Muslim side, it would also mean fighting primarily with local troops, especially the ‘askar, and without large numbers of troops from allied states (for example, when Aleppo and Damascus

might join forces for an invasion). Generally, this would also imply the absence of large numbers of tribal Turkic mercenaries. The expense and difficulties associated with gathering such troops meant that they would tend to be called on in large numbers only for 'high-intensity' combat, when desperation or opportunity outweighed the problems that came with their deployment.

The memoirs of Usama of Shaizar, who was in the thick of much of the fighting in the twelfth century, are particularly valuable. He talks time and again about a series of conflicts between the Muslims and Franks (and sometimes between Muslims and Muslims), particularly against the Antiochene and Tripolitan forces facing his home town, and latterly in the south of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, around Ascalon and Gaza. These events are not necessarily typical. They are all designed to make a point (often that Usama is braver, cleverer or more successful than his peers), and to provide an entertaining moral exemplar for his mainly male Muslim audience. Above all, the memoirs serve as a vehicle for the promotion of Usama himself, an inveterate schemer and self-publicist. Though one would barely guess it from the text, he was so irritating and unpopular at home that he was forced into exile by his own family, and it is his subsequent efforts to ingratiate himself with other Muslim regimes in the region, both Turkic and Fatimid, that provide much of the core of his book. As we have seen, Usama's Shaizar was similarly not typical. It was an Arab-run principality, unlike the predominantly Turkic-governed states that surrounded it.[10]

But, with these provisos, his memoirs provide some very useful insights into the everyday pattern of military experience, not just the grand 'edited highlights' that naturally take up the attention of chroniclers. They are almost unique in showing us the low-level military encounters taking place, seemingly with very high frequency. Although Shaizar was unusual in its non-Turkic governance, the majority of its 'askar still seems to have been of Turkic or, to a lesser extent, Kurdish nomadic heritage.[11] Usama's reflections on the 'low-intensity' combat that characterised most of his military experience around Shaizar are similar to his experiences in other theatres of war, such as around the Fatimid enclave at Ascalon and other parts of the southern border zone of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem.

Usama had close social as well as military contacts with the Franks and, although he was prone to the same prejudices and cultural stereotypes as most of his contemporaries, he knew the local Franks well, as neighbours, as enemies, and even as friends. His contacts were at the highest levels of Frankish society and he was in Shaizar as a young man when King Baldwin II of Jerusalem spent time there as a prisoner in 1124. This seems to have been a relatively civilised and

harmonious captivity.[12] Although he and his relatives spent much time fighting, raiding and counter-raiding with the local Franks, Usama also spent time fighting his local Muslim neighbours, without any overt dissimilarities between the two. If one did not already know the religious persuasion of the protagonists, it would often be hard to guess which was which.

Some of the fighting in Usama's writings finds echoes in the chronicles of the period, but it is mostly of such low intensity that it goes without notice elsewhere. It is interesting to see that although the Muslim cavalry may have made greater use of archery than the Franks, in most instances the differences between the two military traditions are far less pronounced than one would imagine. Both tend to rely on lances and shields, short charges and close-quarters combat to win the day.

Under these circumstances, which were the 'typical' military experience for most participants, the equilibrium of combat was paramount. Neither side had the opportunity to use what we have now come to think of as their 'signature' battle tactics. The Franks had neither the numbers nor the 'fixed point' of a target against which to launch their fearsome and well-coordinated knightly charges. Infantry might be at hand, but the usual shieldwall technique of using them en masse to keep enemy horse archers at a distance was far less practical. From the Muslim perspective, the situation was much the same. The Muslim cavalry we encounter in Usama's text might have been less heavily armoured than the Frankish knights, but most had significant body protection.

At one point, Usama tells a story about how a lack of armour led to horrific injuries being inflicted on one of the 'askar cavalrymen of Shaizar. In a skirmish against the local Franks he wrote that one of his men was 'fighting without any armour except for two cloth garments. A Frankish horseman thrust his spear through his chest and cut through that little bone that is in one's chest [i.e. the sternum], the spear sticking out through his side'.[13] The main point of the story is that despite such horrific wounds, the man survived. What is also striking, however, is that he is singled out as being unusual because he chose not to wear any armour, other than perhaps a quilted tunic. The clear implication is that most professional soldiers in his position would have been wearing armour of some description. In fact, Muslim cavalry equipment could routinely include a mail hauberk, helmet, padded leggings, and shield. Veterans or particularly wealthy troopers might also have a scale-armoured cuirass on top of the hauberk. The 'askar might deploy differently to the Franks on the relatively rare occasions when they met in full-scale battle, but for the vast majority of their military interactions they would have been hard to distinguish

from the Frankish knights and mounted sergeants they faced.[14]

If armour and appearance were similar, so too were the weapons they used. Usama does not give his readers advice about archery but instead focuses on the best way to use a lance, particularly when facing a heavily armoured Frankish opponent. At one point he writes that 'whoever is about to thrust a spear should clasp it tightly to his side and his forearm, and let his horse do what it does in such a situation. For if he should move his hand with the spear or extend out with it, then his thrust will have no effect and do no damage'. This style of attack, called the 'Syrian thrust', may not have been exactly the same as the Frankish couched lance technique, but the principles were clearly very similar: with a heavily armoured enemy, every effort needed to be made to transfer the kinetic energy of the horse into the penetrative power of the tip of the lance or spear.[15]

The fighting styles of the protagonists in low-intensity conflicts tended to converge over time, whereas in high-intensity encounters they were still dangerously divergent. Although the 'askar probably had a higher proportion of archers than the Franks, this is barely apparent when reading Usama, and was by no means as clearcut as a focus on large-scale battles would suggest. The lighter cavalry of the 'askar were generally detribalised Turkic or other nomadic troops, excellent warriors but increasingly trained and drilled, gradually adopting the more sedate and 'civilised' archery techniques of the Middle East, which involved more stable units firing volleys in a disciplined way. As they became more 'regularised', so the nomadic-heritage troops moved towards forms of combat more typical of sedentary societies.[16]

Similarly, this convergence of fighting styles also goes a long way towards explaining the role of light cavalry in the Frankish army. The Turcopoles are largely invisible in our sources and the investment that was put into them, by a society with perennial manpower problems, seems inexplicable.[17] But their role becomes clear when reading Usama. The vast majority of fighting between the crusader states and their Muslim neighbours was that of raid and counter-raid. The outcomes of these lower-level conflicts varied, but the net effect, in the absence of extraordinary circumstances such as exceptional leadership or political upheaval, was generally that of equilibrium. At least part of this equilibrium seems to have been due to the presence of large numbers of Turcopoles on the Frankish side, adding firepower to the Christian cavalry arm, and balancing the greater prevalence of archery on the Muslim side.

It is perhaps worth looking in more detail at an example of how this 'low-intensity' warfare played out in practice. Usama describes a typical raid he was involved in, when he was sent by his father to

forage around the fortified Frankish town of Apamea in 1119. Most of the troops were not Turkic, and they were not available in large numbers. As with many Frankish chroniclers, Usama tends only to focus on the more up-market elements of the forces available. He says, for instance, that he was given part of the 'askar of Shaizar and 'set out at the head of a small group, barely amounting to twenty horsemen', though his later comments confirm that his total force was substantially larger than this would suggest.[18]

The raid's objective was not to attack the Franks, let alone to try to take the town, but rather to 'pillage the crops there', to keep the Franks off balance and to provide food for the 'host of Arab tribesmen' who were camped near Shaizar as part of Il-Ghazi's campaign. Usama took some of the 'askar cavalry as the core of his small force, but also had a 'large body of pillagers and Bedouin', perhaps some 80–120 men in total. He and the 'askar detachment had effectively been tasked to act as guards while the Arabs ravaged the surrounding area. The underlying assumption (which was broadly correct) was that the majority of the local Frankish forces had been either killed or captured at Ager Sanguinis, and the chances were that the mission would not be a particularly onerous one.[19]

In fact, King Baldwin of Jerusalem seems to have rushed reinforcements to Apamea, as part of his efforts to shore up the frontier town's defences and, when Usama's forces had begun to disperse to gather food, we are told that 'a large contingent of Franks came out and attacked us. For, that very night, there had arrived in Apamea sixty horsemen and sixty infantrymen! They cleared us out of the valley, pushing us back before them until we reached our men who were already in the fields pillaging them, and who were now raising a loud tumult.'[20]

The small contingent of the 'askar that were acting as lookouts and guards for the pillaging operation were overrun by the Franks, and fell back on the panic-stricken auxiliaries, where they regrouped. Usama claimed that he kept the Franks at bay by attacking one of the leading Antiochene cavalrymen 'who, in order to pass swiftly before us, had taken off his hauberk and lightened his gear [he may in fact have been a mounted sergeant, less heavily equipped than a knight] . . . I thrust my spear into his chest and he flew off his saddle, dead.'[21]

The remaining Frankish horsemen then fell back and Usama and his detachment wheeled round in pursuit. Usama says that he 'continued on the heels of my enemies, sometimes attacking with my spear, sometimes manoeuvring away from them for cover'. Eventually he managed to confront a Frankish knight whose horse was blown. According to Usama, he 'was wearing a mail hauberk and a gambeson [i.e. a coat of mail on top of a quilted felt jacket] . . . I attacked,

running my spear through him such that it stuck out nearly a cubit in front of him. Thanks to the lightness of my body, the force of the spear thrust and the speed of the horse, I was bumped backwards from the seat of the saddle.' Usama was not wholly unhorsed by the shock of impact, but pushed back onto his horse's rump, until he could recover himself.[22]

During the confused fighting at least one of the 'askar cavalry had fled back to Shaizar, with a story suggesting that Usama's action against the Franks was probably much less successful than he cared to admit. He claimed that 'a thousand Franks came out and attacked us! I doubt if anyone has escaped, except my master!' Eventually the Muslim force managed to escape and Usama sent a messenger ahead to try to counteract the negative impression that the fugitives from the skirmish had conveyed to his father, and doubtless started to elaborate his own version of events.[23]

It is striking that this large-scale skirmish, depicted as the norm of military activity, was primarily that of lance, spear and shield, wielded by broadly equivalent forces, rather than a disparate flurry of heavily armoured knights riding into a shower of arrows. The Bedouin do not seem to have played a significant role in the narrative (Usama keeps that position for himself) but, even if they did participate, we know that they were generally armed with javelins rather than bows, and would have been subsumed into what seems to be a fairly free-flowing encounter. Most troops on both sides do not seem to have engaged to any great extent, echoing the findings of later studies of battlefield psychology. These suggest that the vast majority of soldiers in such small unit actions will assume a relatively passive role, waiting for their junior officers to set the pace, and responding in a way which involves doing just enough to save face, while minimising the danger to themselves.[24]

Casualties on both sides were limited. Usama was clearly worried about what his father would think, and how the abortive foraging mission would look to his peers. But most of the 'askar got home safely, and he was able to put as good a gloss on things as possible. The action seems to have been over before the Frankish infantry could catch up, so presumably their losses were negligible too. Probably the only group to suffer significant casualties were the 'large body of pillagers', who may have been operating on foot, but, as social inferiors, these would probably not have been counted as too great a loss by Usama or by other contemporary commentators.

Interestingly, and confirming that this action had more in common with a joust than a battle, the knight whom Usama had run through (and thought he had killed) turned up in Shaizar only a few days later, this time as a guest, seemingly on a diplomatic or commercial mission:

even in the midst of a 'high-intensity' war, dialogue between enemies continued, more as rivals and neighbours, competitors from different teams, than as fanatical crusaders or jihadists. The crestfallen Usama was embarrassed, given the huge play he had made of killing the Frankish knight, the only redeeming feature of his botched foraging expedition. The knight, he was told, had received only a flesh wound on his waist, a testament to the defensive powers of several layers of armour and protective clothing.[25]

As patterns of warfare adapted to local conditions, it is clear that the styles of combat adopted by the two sides gradually converged. The 'askar cavalry moved closer towards Frankish practice, both in terms of their equipment and in their willingness to come to close quarters. Their use of archery became more 'sedentary', used as a prelude to a close combat, rather than as a battle-winning technique in its own right. Similarly, on the crusader side, this low-intensity, fluid warfare between raiding groups generally precluded the full-scale coordinated charge of the kind which we normally associate with medieval knights. This was a style of fighting that was much more individualistic, a combination of the skills used in hunting, or the close-combat talents of the joust, with Turcopoles providing the mobile archery to counter the firepower of the 'askar.

And, just as warfare between the Franks and Muslims converged in low-intensity combat, so criminality, on all sides, merged imperceptibly into military confrontation. A couple of years after the fall of Ascalon, we find Usama skirmishing in Egyptian employ. He was with an armed party of political refugees, trying to make its way from Egypt to Syria. The small column spent the best part of a week under attack by Bedouin before being surprised 'by a party of Franks . . . [who] killed anyone whom they could and took my own brother Muhammad . . . as prisoner. We had taken refuge in the hills, so the Franks left us and went back . . . We climbed through narrow and treacherous paths . . . The [Bedouin] killed anyone who got separated from the main party straight away.'[26]

The sheer volume of these low-intensity, but occasionally deadly attacks is striking. Violence was endemic. If you could conclude your journey in secrecy, or in such large numbers that you deterred attack, you might be safe. Otherwise, low-level violence and skirmishing with many of the people you encountered, ranging from petty criminals, through to organised gangs or enemy troops, was the norm, and only to be expected.[27]

Typical, Not Archetypical

As we shall see, battles and large-scale campaigns between the heavy, slow-moving Frankish armies and their nomadic Turkic enemies were

at the heart of what we generally think of as ‘crusading warfare’. These high-intensity interactions were pivotal but surprisingly rare, as the asymmetrical nature of the fighting made the range of possible outcomes extremely hard for either side to predict.

Far more frequent were incidents of ‘low-intensity’ combat, which was the norm of frontier fighting for most of our period. And it was not just the scale of such fighting which distinguished it from the higher-profile, high-intensity, asymmetrical combat between Turkic warrior and Frankish knight: it was also far more equal in terms of tactics and approach. Asymmetry dominated decision-making and fighting styles at the highest levels, but a strange equilibrium was in place at the level of the skirmish and the raid. ‘Arrows and the knightly charge’ might be the archetype of crusading warfare, but ‘tip and run with spear and shield’ were perhaps more typical of everyday military experience.

PART II

Crusading Armies

CHAPTER 4

The People

WE WERE ALL BORN into nation states. On an emotional level at least, we take for granted that this is the normal way the world is ordered. Our default assumption is that the Spanish army, say, consists of Spaniards or that the Russian army will be overwhelmingly made up of Russians. If demographics enter our thinking at all in a discussion about armies, it would generally be only on an extremely high level, perhaps looking to find a correlation between the size of the population in a given country and the scale of the army that such a population might be able to support. But the nation state is a relatively new invention, and the armies of the crusader states and their opponents defy our modern, shorthand ways of thinking. We need to look at the issue of manpower within the region from a fresh perspective.[1]

We tend to assume, not unreasonably, that crusading warfare was primarily that of newly arrived European forces, pitched against local Muslim armies. Crusader or Frankish armies were, one would imagine, generally made up of crusaders or Franks. And their Syrian or Egyptian opponents presumably fielded armies of Syrians and Egyptians. Nothing could be further from the truth.

First, we need to make clear distinctions between the populations as a whole, those who governed them, and those who fought for the latter. In the medieval world, and particularly the medieval world of the Middle East, these could be three entirely different groups. Having a large population of one particular ethnicity or religious group could be militarily helpful but often not as much as one might imagine. It was also surprisingly rare. The populations of Egypt and Palestine, for instance, had been so systematically demilitarised since classical times that they were rarely able to supply the quality or quantity of soldiers that were needed, even for local defence. There was almost never a cosy correlation between the size of the population and the number of available soldiers. Or, if there was, the relationship was more likely to

be economic than demographic: the Egyptian population, for example, could produce money to hire troops, but rarely produce the troops themselves.

The other key driver of army composition was not just a lack of native fighting troops, but an alarming tendency for local people to fail to fit into the neat boxes which we provide for them. Civil populations across the region were rarely homogeneous and even more rarely an accurate reflection of those who governed them. Saladin, for example, was a Kurd, whose armies were largely formed around Turkic steppe warriors and whose subjects were predominantly Syrians or Egyptians. The ruling dynasty of Fatimid Egypt were Muslim Armenians, kept in power by an army of sub-Saharan Africans and Christian Armenians, ruling over a civil population that combined Arabs and Egyptians, Christians and Muslims.

This embarrassingly untidy refusal to conform to our contemporary prejudices produced some extraordinary outcomes. There were often large contingents of Christians in Muslim armies, sometimes even forming a majority. Similarly, there were frequently large groups of Muslims fighting in crusading armies, whether as mercenaries, auxiliaries or allies. Egyptian Muslim armies mainly consisted of soldiers who were neither Muslim nor Egyptian. The armies of the local Syrian states that faced the Franks further to the north were largely led and manned by Turkic newcomers who were every bit as foreign to the region as the crusaders were. Everywhere you look, the reality of conflict is counterintuitive.

The Crisis of Frankish Manpower

We will examine Muslim armies in more detail later, but a lack of locally sourced military manpower was a general problem across the region as a whole. The problems facing the crusaders, presumably isolated and unpopular with the local populations, would, one imagines, be particularly acute. But while manpower was indeed a perennial issue for the crusader states, it was not always for the reasons one would expect.

The first generation of Franks were always going to be outsiders and foreigners. There were very few of them. They had arrived in an ancient land, built on a complex web of different communities, relationships and affiliations. Matters were made infinitely worse by the fact that not only did the crusaders take huge casualties in fighting their way through to the Holy Land but, having ejected the Egyptian garrison from Jerusalem, most of the participants felt that their work was done. They had signed up for a campaign, a spiritual quest with a physical goal, and that goal had been achieved. Job done. As soon as

was practicably possible, many crusaders took the boat home, to see the families and lands that they had left behind several years earlier. Many of the veterans stayed in Palestine long enough to defeat the Egyptians at Ascalon in August 1099, just a few weeks after the capture of Jerusalem, but even then they were heavily outnumbered. After that, most of them were gone.[2]

The shortage of European troops in the very early days was extreme. Those left behind in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, the main crusader state, had only one small port, Jaffa, and a barely defensible road from there on towards the capital, Jerusalem. Godfrey of Bouillon, the first Latin ruler of the kingdom, scarcely had an army worthy of the name. As Ralph of Caen put it, the 'departure of many heavily armed mounted troops from the army so reduced the number of such soldiers from the earlier high point that barely two hundred men, who were equipped with breastplates, remained to defend Jerusalem'.[3] Each of the main Muslim-held coastal cities could individually raise a far bigger army than this, as could each of the major Turkic-governed states of the hinterlands, such as Damascus or Aleppo.

Calling for help from the west was essential but communicating the true nature of the situation had to be played very carefully. Many more troops, and ideally their families, were needed. Letters asking for assistance could certainly emphasise the spiritual rewards that new settlers would reap in performing their duties in the service of Christ. Stating the true extent of the need, however, could also be off-putting. Writing to tell potential settlers that they would be surrounded by hostile armies was hardly likely to appeal to any but the most fanatical or suicidal. The messaging needed to be handled very sensitively.[4]

The manpower issue improved only very slowly and was never fully resolved. Even Jerusalem, religious focal point and capital of the pre-eminent crusader state, was massively under-populated.[5] The city was of vital importance from a religious perspective, but it was never an obvious strategic or commercial centre. Even within the crusader states, Acre, Antioch and Edessa were all larger cities, more populous and far richer than Jerusalem. The crusaders did not help matters with the massacre that followed the siege of the city in 1099, or by legislating to ensure that only Christians were allowed to live in the city thereafter. Fifteen years after the capture of Jerusalem, for instance, we still find King Baldwin I scouring the furthest reaches of the kingdom to find native Christians with whom to repopulate it.[6] Decades later, the population was still so small that defending the extensive wall circuit was daunting. When Saladin invaded in 1177, the population of Jerusalem were so scared, and the garrison so

diminished, that they rushed to the citadel almost immediately, as they doubted their ability to defend the city walls against a determined aggressor.[7]

The scale of the problem was clear, even before the First Crusade was finished. Unless the manpower issue could be resolved, the crusader states, and particularly the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, were ripe for the taking by the first capable Muslim leader who realised the true extent of their vulnerability. A chronic lack of troops made their survival unlikely from the very beginning.

The need for manpower, and the shockingly robust way this need was addressed, is shown in the extreme measures taken to ensure the military service of all available settlers and visitors. Even priests were recognised as potential fighting men. Article 20 of the laws drawn up at the Council of Nablus in 1120, for instance, said that if 'a cleric bears arms in the cause of defence, he is not to be held culpable'.[8] The matter-of-fact way in which this clause was inserted into the legal code speaks volumes. Christianity was, in theory at least, relatively pacifistic, and canon law in Europe would have expressly forbidden priests from fighting. Here, it was both expected and needed. Raiders could come at any time and clerics, particularly in the more isolated rural communities, might have to supply military leadership for their congregations. When the kingdom was embattled, every able-bodied man was needed, priests included. This was the legal framework of a society on a perpetual war footing, and one in which everyone, young or old, soldier or priest, had to do their duty.[9]

We shall look at recruitment policies among the Frankish communities in more detail later, but it was always clear that, however draconian the mobilisation of the European population, it was never going to be enough.

Manpower and the 'Imperialist' Narrative

Saying that there were very few Europeans or crusaders in the Middle East in 1099 is not the same as suggesting that there were not many Christians, however. When he started negotiations with Saladin during the Third Crusade, King Richard I referred, with genuine indignation, to the fact that the Muslim armies had invaded Palestine and were now in possession of 'our lands'. Saladin's own advisers, heavily involved in the talks, said that the precondition Richard set down for progress was that the Muslims 'should restore all the lands to us and return to your own countries'.[10] This reads strangely to modern eyes but it was not just a rhetorical flourish or a negotiating stance. When he said 'our lands', he was not referring to Angevin land, or French land, or even 'western' land. He was referring to the Christian lands: the heartlands of the religion, whose people had been subjected to

Muslim invasion and rule at different times, but whose population, even in the twelfth century, was still very largely Christian.

The European armies fighting in the Holy Land were always outnumbered. There is a compelling and well-established modern narrative and mode of thinking which explains why this was so. This narrative lies at the heart of the way in which most of us look at the crusades and the crusader states. It underpins how modern politicians of every persuasion, and every religious and ethnic background view the crusades. And it explains the impact they imagine the crusades had on the situation we find in the Middle East today.

The main reason the crusaders were outnumbered, so this narrative goes, is that the crusaders (the 'Franks'), were a small and oppressive force of invaders, unwelcome aliens trying to impose themselves in the heart of the Muslim world. There may have been a few local Christians in the Holy Land. There are, after all, a few (increasingly few) still in the Middle East today. But even here, so the theory suggests, the crusaders deliberately alienated themselves from the local Christian communities that might otherwise have supported them. As religious fanatics, the assumption is that they would be intensely prejudiced against those of other beliefs. As they came from the devoutly Catholic lands of western Europe, the crusaders would naturally view the small number of local non-Catholic Christians with intense suspicion, and deploy oppressive policies against them. Heretics were persecuted in Europe and, so the logic would run, that would inevitably be the case in any European conquests in the east.

If true, this narrative would have major implications for the practice of warfare. The consequences of the crusaders' oppressive policies would naturally impact on their military situation. They would also inevitably lead to their own destruction. The local Christians were a minority, and even they saw the Franks as oppressors in a foreign land. The Franks were an occupying power, small in number and faced with the everyday experience of a sullen and hostile indigenous population. So of course the crusaders would always be outnumbered and surrounded, living isolated in their castles.

Superficially, this interpretation has much to commend it. It accords well with our present understanding of the world, and we naturally tend to take the easy option, extrapolating backwards. Despite its lazy plausibility, however, almost none of the above is true. The idea of an isolated and alienated Frankish presence is explicable and attractive but it raises far more questions than it answers. The Franks, on a good day, were very effective soldiers. But how could such a (supposedly) unpopular regime, with its small and isolated military forces, survive for almost two centuries, surrounded by a far

more numerous enemy? And, if the 'crusaders' were so small in number and so unpopular, how is it that we find them able to field, albeit with great effort, armies of up to 20,000 men when faced with the remorseless Muslim invasions of the 1180s?

In fact, most of the population of the crusader states was still Christian, rather than Muslim, even before the Franks arrived. Muslim armies had conquered much of the Middle East from the seventh century onwards, but did not enforce widespread involuntary conversion. There had been some periods when religious oppression was more pronounced than others. Christians had been subjected to severe persecution by the Fatimid caliph al-Hakim (996–1021), characterised by executions and the demolition of local churches. The Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the most sacred place of Christian worship, had been destroyed in 1009.[11] Even in times of more tolerance Christians were subjected to higher rates of taxation than their Muslim neighbours (just as Muslims tended to be subjected to higher taxation when under Christian rule). But the pressure on the local population was not so severe as to cause mass conversion, and there were significant regional variations. Much of Syria, for instance, had still been under Byzantine control until the 1080s. Recent research suggests the Christians were still in the majority across most of the crusader states.[12]

And, just as there were more local Christians than has generally been supposed, so their attitudes towards their new 'crusader' governments were more complex, and often more positive, than one might imagine. Relations between the Franks and the local Christian communities were sometimes fractious but necessity ensured that they were broadly tolerant and generally friendly. The main fault lines within the broader Christian community were just as often between the different local groups as they were between Catholics and non-Catholics. The local members of the Orthodox church, for instance, generally called 'Greeks' by the Franks, but also known as Melkites, saw the other Christian sects as heretics, and there was often friction between them, the Armenian Church and the Syrian Orthodox communities (also known as Jacobites). They viewed other Christian groups, such as the Maronites and Nestorians, with suspicion, seeing them as schismatics if they were feeling charitable, or 'heretics' when feeling less generous. Ironically, because there had been no such history of bad blood, the Catholic Franks were often able to establish better relations with the different Christian groups than the earlier Byzantine Christian governments had ever been able to, prior to the Muslim invasions.[13]

The Frankish armies were indeed usually heavily outnumbered and they did have an increasingly sophisticated system of fortifications

across their lands but, as we shall see, the need to oppress local communities, whether Muslim or Christian, was not the main reason this was so. It is true that the Franks were the new rulers, that they were foreigners when they arrived in the region, and that they naturally assumed the leading positions in the political and religious hierarchies. But that had also been true to a very large extent of the previous Byzantine administration. And it was also true of every major Muslim power in the region. All were controlled by foreigners, generally Turkic minorities in most of Syria, and the military and governmental hierarchies reflected that dominance. Nothing was ever as clear-cut as our modern stereotypes would lead us to believe. Even in those areas where Muslims did form the majority of the population, the normal relationship with the Franks was that of landlord and tenant, rather than that of jihadist and crusader. All things being equal, they would doubtless have preferred their landlord to be a co-religionist, but it was never an issue so significant as to propel them into open revolt.[14]

It is also the case that although the Franks arrived as a relatively small group of foreign soldiers, over the course of the twelfth century extensive Frankish rural settlements were established in areas where there were already large numbers of local Christians, living, working and worshipping with them in what appears to have been relatively harmonious circumstances. The Frankish population, particularly in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, was both larger and far better integrated than has generally been imagined.[15]

Ironically, the level of integration was such that visitors from the west, steeped in the intolerance of Catholic Europe, were shocked by the intermarriage and cooperation that they found in the Holy Land. When things went wrong, westerners found it easy to blame what they saw as the soft and ‘effeminate’ ways of the local Franks, with the presumption that they were now so integrated into local communities that even the nobility had ‘gone native’. Hostile visitors often described the eastern Franks as ‘pulani’, with the implication of their being somehow ‘half-caste’.[16] The crusader states were not run by a small group of isolated religious fanatics, hated by the communities they ruled over. They could not have survived for almost two centuries if that had been the case. And the majority of their subjects were local Christians, rather than oppressed Muslims.

Christian Communities: Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell

The main Christian groups in the crusader states were the Greek Orthodox, the Syrian Orthodox, the Armenians, the Maronites and, particularly once colonial rural settlement began to gather pace in the second quarter of the twelfth century, the Frankish Catholics.

Religious bigotry was far less prevalent than one might suppose, particularly when compared to twelfth-century Europe or the Byzantine empire. This tolerance was based on avoiding issues rather than confronting them. There was no major attempt to reconcile or clarify religious differences between the various Christian sects. Instead, everyone focused on the far more practical approach of just trying to rub along together. Where rapprochement between the different churches did take place, as, for instance, with the Maronite community, the coming together was gradual, based firmly on mutual respect and the wishes of local communities.[17]

Extraordinary instances of cooperation can be found throughout the crusader states. The Frankish religious leader of the Principality of Antioch, their patriarch, invited the Syrian Orthodox leader, Michael the Syrian, to come with him to debate the Cathar issue at the third Lateran Council in 1179. Neither party was unduly disturbed by Michael's claim that he himself was the legitimate patriarch of Antioch, or that the Syrian Orthodox were considered by some in the west to be just as heretical as the Cathars they were discussing. Baldwin, the Frankish count of Marash, had an Armenian priest as his personal confessor. And we know of many instances of surprisingly close cooperation between different denominations such as where, for example, a Greek Orthodox priest even wished to be buried as a Hospitaller.

Religious practices could be surprisingly permeable. In many instances, and certainly on a localised basis, cooperation between different denominations was the norm. As the twelfth century progressed, this cooperation became more ingrained, helped partly by increased familiarity and intermarriage between the communities, and partly by the sense of common purpose that being beleaguered and surrounded brought with it.[18]

The Syrian Orthodox patriarch of Antioch, who had been supplanted in the local church hierarchy by his Frankish equivalent, and who had every reason to feel bitter towards the new Catholic arrivals, was magnanimous in the way he described their tolerance. The Franks, he said, 'never sought a single formula for all the Christian people and languages, but they considered as Christian anyone who worshipped the cross without investigation or examination'.[19]

This was a policy based on practical considerations of self-interest. In 1120, for example, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem found itself under acute threat. There had been several years of enemy attacks. Drought had caused severe crop failures. The army of Antioch had been almost wiped out just a few months earlier, and the entire principality had barely been brought back from the edge of extinction.

Morale was at an all-time low and, as was common with very religious societies, people looked within to find the fault. As William of Tyre put it, since 'it was evident to all that the sins of the people had provoked God to wrath, it was decided by common consent that they must amend their wrongdoing and restrain their excesses'.[20]

The decision was made to hold a council at Nablus, a general assembly which included all the leading secular lords, as well as the most senior clerics, in order to establish a clear religious and moral code in law. As this was the early days of the kingdom, almost everyone present would have been born in Europe. The small Frankish 'Catholic' community was surrounded by Christians who would have been termed 'heretics' in Europe. If this assembly had been held in the west, confronted with such clear proof of God's displeasure, item one on the agenda would almost certainly have been how to deal with the 'heretic problem'.

In the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, however, supposedly an epicentre of medieval religious zealotry, there was no such discussion. A new moral and legal code of conduct was compiled, with twenty-five articles. There was some discussion of relations with local Muslims but, strikingly, no mention whatsoever of any legal restraints that needed to be made with regards to local Christians, whatever their denomination.[21]

This was partly based on an understanding of the new relationships that were being forged. Very few women had come out on crusade, entirely understandably, so intermarriage with other communities began early on. But, even more fundamentally, tolerance was based on need. The crusader states were heavily outnumbered, and would always be so. You could afford to take a hard line on heresy if you lived in western Europe. If you lived in Palestine or Syria, you needed all the help you could get.

Intermarriage was based on necessity and a shared religious culture, and was carried out at all levels of society from the very earliest days of the crusader states. The royal families of the Latin East were inextricably linked to the local Christians. Baldwin I, king of Jerusalem, and previously count of Edessa, was married to Morphia (queen of Jerusalem, 1116–26/8), an Armenian, daughter of the lord of Melitene. Their children founded the leading dynasties of the crusader states, based from the earliest days on the partnership between the Catholic west and the Christian churches of the east.[22] After a few years, most of the 'Frankish crusader' families were of mixed race, with Palestinian, Syrian or Armenian blood, and that process started at the very top.

Intermarriage brought the different Christian communities ever closer together. As with so many aspects of life, our sources focus on

the upper classes rather than the rank and file, but it is clear that the example of the royal family was followed by their vassals and leading tenants. One of Baldwin II's cousins, for instance, Galeran of Le Puiset, married the daughter of the Armenian lord of al-Bira, while another cousin, Joscelin, married the Armenian daughter of Lord Constantine, son of Rupen.[23]

The celebrity marriages of the ruling class feature most heavily in the chronicles, but the integration of ordinary people into local Christian communities was probably even more widespread and also received recognition, albeit in a more general sense. As Fulcher of Chartres put it:

> [we,] who were westerners have now become easterners . . . We have already forgotten the places of our birth; already these are unknown to many of us or not mentioned any more . . . Some have taken wives not only of their own people but Syrians [i.e. local Christians] or Armenians or even Saracens who have obtained the grace of baptism . . . People use the eloquence and idioms of diverse languages in conversing back and forth. Words of different languages have become common property known to each nationality and mutual faith unites those who are ignorant of their descent . . . He who was born a stranger is now as one born here; he who was born an alien has become as a native.[24]

The idea that 'mutual faith unites' was a powerful one, and an essential precondition for the survival of the crusader states. Tolerance in the face of religious differences that would have torn many other Christian societies apart was based on necessity. The Frankish armies needed as many recruits as possible. Interrogating doctrinal issues too closely was in no one's interests, particularly in a community where many had parents from different denominations and different heritages. It is easier to get along if you choose not to confront issues that are incapable of easy resolution: as the American military used to say: 'don't ask, don't tell'.

Armenians

There were particularly large numbers of Christians in the northern crusader states, and beyond. We know, for instance, that there was a Georgian community as far south as Jerusalem, with close links to leading Frankish commanders and the military orders.[25] But the most prominent, in terms of their interactions with the Franks, were the Armenians. They had always had an uneasy relationship with the Byzantines and hence with their Greek Orthodox co-religionists in the northern crusader states. The Byzantines tended to see them as heretics, and to a large extent this may have suited the Armenians, as they were always keen to establish their independence and a sense of separation from the empire.[26]

It is hard to overestimate their influence or their military contribution. Both of the first two kings of Jerusalem had previously been counts of Edessa, and were immersed in the politics of the region, with its largely Armenian population. There were relatively few Franks in the northern crusader states, particularly in Edessa, so intermarriage with local Armenians was common. Most of the rulers of Jerusalem were at least partly of Armenian descent.[27]

Their prominence in the crusader states was also partly in recognition of their military contribution. In a region which had seen most of the population deliberately demilitarised since classical times, the Armenians were always exceptional. Occupying harsh lands and on a sensitive border march, the area had a tendency to breed good soldiers, and the aggressive, entrepreneurial spirit that often characterises people who have no obvious fallback position. Even before the Muslim invasions, the Armenians had occupied a buffer zone between Rome and the Persian empire to the east. For centuries before the crusaders arrived, they were stuck between the Byzantines to the west, co-religionists who viewed them as heretics, and the Muslim Turkic nomad tribes filtering off the steppes into the richer lands of Asia Minor.

Once the crusader states were established, Armenian warlords and their forces took on a very active military role.[28] There were Armenian rulers in Gargar in 1122, for instance, and the city was passed into the hands of a Frankish garrison only because the local Armenians felt unable to continue to defend it under sustained Turkic pressure. The *Chronicle of Michael the Syrian* also mentions several other lords, both Syrian Orthodox and Armenian alike, who continued to hold lands under the Franks. Large swathes of the local communities were clearly identifying themselves with, and participating in, Frankish rule, and played a very active part in the defence of the crusader states.[29]

There were so many Armenian refugees from the city of Edessa living in Jerusalem when the city fell in 1187 (perhaps there as residents, and perhaps as part of the garrison or militia), that special arrangements had to be made for their ransom. Similarly, there were another 500 Armenians from al-Bira resident in Jerusalem at the time, whom the new local Muslim ruler claimed as his personal booty. In both cases we only know of the extent of their presence in these urban communities by the accident of references in Muslim sources.[30] If these figures are even remotely accurate, and they may well be, given that they were made as financial demands for groups of individuals that were being registered by Saladin's bureaucrats, it would seem that very large elements of the Edessan Armenian community were living in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem by that time. Displaced when

their lands were overrun by the Turkic armies of Zengi in 1144, these communities seem to have spread out into the different towns and cities of the kingdom, and presumably into the army as well as into a wide variety of civilian occupations.

William of Tyre, writing in the 1180s, said that nearly all the inhabitants of Antioch were 'true believers', by which he primarily meant native Christians of different denominations, rather than Franks.[31] There were Armenian soldiers at all levels in the military of the crusader states, from mercenaries and infantry, through to knights and lords. In 1124, for example, we find Usama writing about the presence of high-ranking Armenian and Frankish prisoners being held in his family's castle: 'there were some hostages – some Frankish and Armenian knights – with us at Shaizar that Baldwin [II], king of the Franks, had offered as security for the terms of his own release . . .'[32] The hostages were soon freed and, in an interesting commentary on the ever shifting alliances of the Middle East, Muslim troops from Shaizar ended up fighting off a cavalry contingent from Homs to ensure that the hostages were able to make their way safely back into Frankish territory.[33] These were not ordinary knights. These men were chosen as hostages for their seniority, and hence monetary value. They were literally part of a king's ransom. Armenian knights were clearly not just present in Frankish forces, but took their place in the highest ranks of the army.

Mobile as ever, we also find evidence of several Armenian knights further south, in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. We only know of their existence because of their distinctively Armenian names, as there are few surviving records, but they were undoubtedly part of a far larger contingent. There seems to have been an early influx of Armenian knights to the Galilean frontier, perhaps accompanying Joscelin of Courtenay when he ventured south in 1113 and became prince of Galilee.[34] The Galilean lordship was one of the most heavily militarised areas of the kingdom and its small army was almost constantly engaged in large-scale raids and counter-raids against the Damascenes. Veteran heavy cavalry from Edessa would doubtless have been extremely welcome and, even after Joscelin's departure back north in 1119, we find that Armenian knights had been encouraged to put down roots on the marches. A knight called Bardas, for instance ('Barda Armeno'), was still in the service of William of Bures, the prince of Galilee in 1126, and we find other Armenian knights serving in Caesarea in the 1140s and in Jerusalem in the 1160s.[35]

As well as fighting in the Christian armies, Armenians played a leading role in the Fatimid Egyptian military during the first half of the twelfth century. The conquest of Egypt by the Turkic forces of Nur al-Din and his Kurdish generals Shirkuh and Saladin made their career

prospects there increasingly precarious, however.[36] There was a widespread exodus of the Armenian community of Egypt from the early 1170s onwards, most of whom went to the Christian lands in the north. In November 1172, the Armenian patriarch in Egypt relocated to Jerusalem and many of his flock followed suit. Significant parts of the large Frankish armies that appear in the 1180s were probably composed of Armenian émigré soldiers, carrying on the fight against their old enemy, Saladin and his Turkic–Kurdish armies.[37]

Armenian soldiers also provided important military specialists for the crusader armies. The fact that they had developed and maintained such specialisms showed the extent to which these skills were exercised. At the critical siege of Tyre in 1124, for example, the crusaders' eventual success was at least partly due to the expertise of an Armenian artillery specialist named Havedic. The Venetians had been in charge of the Christian siege artillery, but the Tyrian counter-battery fire was so effective that it was felt necessary to neutralise it before further progress could be made.[38]

Despite providing excellent value for money and quickly outgunning the Tyrian defenders in a way which the entire Venetian fleet and its siege engineers had been unable to achieve, many were jealous of the Armenian specialist's 'celebrity' status. As William of Tyre dryly put it, he 'was granted an honourable salary, so that he might maintain himself in his customary magnificence'.[39] One does not achieve such a level of expertise, an international reputation and a predilection for 'customary magnificence' without putting in a lot of work. It is a safe assumption that Havedic and his peers were veteran professionals whose services were constantly in high demand. A region in a perpetual state of war was a natural training ground and an active marketplace for high-calibre mercenaries such as this.

The role of the Armenian community in the defence of the crusader states is generally underplayed by chroniclers who were uninterested in ethnicity and keen to focus on the exploits of the elite Frankish knights. There are few battles when we have a clear sense of the proportions of native Christians involved, but on the occasions when we do have information available, they seem to have played a surprisingly prominent role. In the Antiochene campaign of 1119, for instance, it is only because of a stray remark by one of the chroniclers (himself a native Christian) that we discover that almost half the 'Frankish' cavalry referred to in other battle reports were in fact Armenian.[40] We do not know how many of the professional infantry in the army were locally recruited (presumably a very significant proportion), but we do know that the majority of the army were non-feudal Armenian volunteers serving as auxiliaries, 'who had gone to battle for the sake of pay' or plunder.[41] And, as we have seen, even

after their commander Prince Roger had been killed, it was an Armenian knight who led the last-ditch defence around the fragment of the True Cross, rallying the survivors of the Frankish centre and vanguard in a forlorn attempt to fend off the Turkic cavalry.[42] So, in one of the most pivotal battles of the crusader states, we find that not only were almost half the 'crusader' cavalry actually local Christians but most of the infantry were too, and that the senior figure in charge of the last stand was Armenian.

Despite the habitual vagueness of the chronicles, the Armenian contribution, both in terms of numbers and professionalism, was vital. Indeed, one of the most heroic and audacious feats of arms ever undertaken by a 'crusader' army was in fact carried out by a unit consisting entirely of Armenian troops.

In the spring of 1123, King Baldwin II of Jerusalem was on campaign on the frontiers of Edessa. On 18 April, while separated from the main body of the Frankish army, he was captured by Turkic troops as he crossed a tributary of the Euphrates.[43] Baldwin and his companions were sent to join other Frankish prisoners of war in the dungeons of Kharput, a Muslim castle far to the north-east, about 150km from Edessa's northern borders.[44] Even if an army could have been cobbled together to try to rescue King Baldwin, difficulties of terrain and the distances involved precluded any attempt to undertake a formal relief effort and siege: and even if a siege were successful, it was unlikely that the Frankish prisoners could be brought out alive.

The Armenian troops in Edessa were determined to do whatever they could to rescue their Frankish overlord. Rather than launch a large-scale frontal attack, with only minimal chances of success, a small group of elite troops, between 15 and 50 in number, set off on a long-range raid, deep into the heart of enemy territory, to take the castle by sleight of hand. They were helped by the fact that the Muslim Turkic invaders had not long been in the region, and the majority of the local population were still Armenian Christians.[45] The Armenian force set off disguised in civilian clothes, allowing it to blend in with the local community. When it arrived at Kharput it found that the castle was very poorly defended, largely because its position made any rescue attempt extraordinarily unlikely. The Edessan troops were able to talk their way into the castle, posing as argumentative litigants looking for justice in the local court, and succeeded in overpowering the garrison. King Baldwin and his companions were soon freed, but it was at this point that the full difficulty of their situation became apparent.[46]

The region was immediately flooded with Turkic cavalry, putting the castle under a loose siege and patrolling the nearby areas to ensure that no one escaped. As any large group would be quickly

intercepted, it was decided that Baldwin would stay in the castle with the majority of the men, but that Baldwin's cousin, Joscelin, would try to break out with a couple of their Armenian rescuers. Joscelin would then make his way back to Edessa and organise a more substantial relief army. In the meantime, Baldwin and his Armenian troops would defend the castle as best they could. The plan had only a slim chance of success, and things inevitably went wrong. Joscelin and his companions only just evaded the enemy cavalry and their efforts to escape capture meant that it was several weeks before they got back into friendly territory and began the process of mustering a relief force.

Meanwhile, the situation at Kharput was deteriorating rapidly. The small, impromptu garrison was unable to keep the Muslim besiegers away from the walls. In the absence of a large body of defenders or a viable Frankish field army with which to distract them, Muslim mining operations proceeded quickly. To make matters worse, the position of the castle looked far more secure than it actually was. It was built on a hill with large deposits of soft chalk, and the besiegers were soon able to undermine the walls. The castle's main tower was brought down and the water supplies compromised. The garrison had no choice but to surrender. They were promised their lives if they gave up the castle, but, in the event, the agreement was ignored. Baldwin and two other valuable hostages were spared and shipped off to a different prison. The remainder of the garrison, Frankish prisoners of war and their Armenian rescuers, were all tortured to death.[47]

The most striking part of the whole enterprise, quite apart from the skill and bravery of those who carried out the mission, was the way it showed the integrated nature of Armenian troops within the Frankish military system. The rescue force was entirely Armenian and, as far as we know, acting as volunteers on a potentially suicidal mission to rescue their Frankish king. Although the raid was only partially successful, and almost all the Armenian soldiers were killed, there are few better examples of dedication and daring in medieval history.

Maronites

The Maronites were another warlike Christian community and were generally well disposed towards the Franks. Like the Armenians, they had also been on the receiving end of persecution from the Byzantines and, perhaps as a result, were more doctrinally inclined towards the western, Catholic, branch of Christianity. They were originally from the region around Antioch, but by the time of the First Crusade they had taken refuge in the northern mountain ranges of what became the County of Tripoli, broadly modern Lebanon.[48]

They were much more concentrated than the other Christian

communities and, within their enclave, were a dominant and numerous group. William of Tyre described them as 'a race of Syrians . . . near the Lebanon range, who occupied territory near the city of [Gibelet] . . . These people were by no means few in numbers; in fact they were generally estimated at more than 40,000 . . . They were a stalwart race, valiant fighters, and of great service to the Christians in the difficult engagements which they so frequently had with the enemy.' William was perhaps being a little over-enthusiastic with regard to numbers, but he was correct in making the point that there were a lot of them, and they were useful men to have on your side in a fight.[49]

The close links between the Maronites and the Franks were reflected in increasing cultural and religious connections. This culminated in 1181 with the Maronites moving towards union with the Catholic Church, keeping their own religious hierarchy but adopting Catholic practice in all matters of significance. In a deeply religious age there could scarcely be a stronger signal of the close cultural and military links between the two communities.[50]

Greek Orthodox

The local Greek Orthodox population had kept their own form of religious devotion under Muslim rule and they continued to do so once Palestine and Syria came back into Christian control with the arrival of the crusaders.[51] They were present in large numbers in the major centres of the crusader states, each of the capital cities and the coastal towns. They were also in many of the rural areas, even in the more far-flung places such as the south of the Transjordan (what the Franks called the 'Oultrejourdain'), which had always been on the fringes of Christianity. Greek Orthodox Christians in the northern crusader states, particularly Antioch, tended to be Greek speakers. Those in Palestine, where they constituted the majority of the local Christian population, and which had been under Muslim control for far longer, tended to speak Arabic or Syriac.[52]

The myth that the local populations were better treated by their previous Muslim rulers than by their Frankish co-religionists is no more true in the case of the Greek Orthodox than for the Armenians or Maronites. Although there were inevitable tensions with Christians of other denominations, the Greek Orthodox community in particular had suffered from Muslim repression in the years before the First Crusade arrived.[53] Even in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, where local Christians were perhaps a smaller proportion of the overall population, the Greek Orthodox community still played a prominent part in society.[54]

From the mid-1150s onwards we find the royal family of

Jerusalem actively encouraging new Greek Orthodox settlements as part of their policy of ensuring stability and a sufficiency of manpower. Ascalon, for instance, was brought back into Christian hands in 1153, but the Christian population had been hounded out by the Muslim authorities during the late eleventh century, as the town became increasingly militarised. The Orthodox church of St Mary of the Green had already been destroyed by Muslim and Jewish crowds in 939 and permission to rebuild it was refused. King Amalric (raised as a Catholic but with practising Greek Orthodox Armenian relatives on his mother's side), paid for the church to be restored as part of an initiative of putting a new native Christian community in place. The town was always a frontier location, and building up a reliable population was important for the economic stability of the region and for local defence.[55]

There were always bound to be tensions and squabbles, both between and within the different religious hierarchies. But the coming of the Franks, and the re-establishment of Christian rule in the Holy Land, undoubtedly brought about an invigoration of Christian worship in the region. A commonality of purpose among Christians of all nominations, brought together by opportunity, adversity and shared threats, was in the interests of the Franks, and could be turned to mutual economic and military advantage.[56]

Syrian Orthodox

Like the Armenians, the Syrian Orthodox population were seen as heretics by the Byzantines and had a long history of animosity with them. They were more numerous in the northern crusader states of Antioch and Edessa than in the south: their founder, Jacob Baradaeus (hence 'Jacobites'), was bishop of Edessa around 542. They were present in the south too, however, and there was always a Syrian Orthodox community in Jerusalem. Syriac was still spoken by some, but most of the Syrian Orthodox community were Arabic speakers by the twelfth century.[57]

It is hard to be exact about the extent to which Greek or Syrian Orthodox Christians featured in Frankish armies. At the upper end of the social spectrum, we know that there were some senior local families and local knights, but it is very hard to get a sense of their relative weighting in society. Evidence is accidental rather than absent, however, as they tended to adopt Frankish names relatively early on. We know of some native knights, for instance, but we are probably looking at many others in the sources too, albeit with Frankicised names. There were certainly knights from the local Orthodox communities in the kingdom of Jerusalem. It was the 'Latin' Kingdom of Jerusalem, and the upper echelons of society were

dominated by the Catholic Franks, but it was also a society that was far more complex than that would imply, and where ethnic and religious boundaries were not entirely impermeable. Above all, it was a society at war, with chronic manpower problems.

We find Arab knights in possession of the villages of Huetdebes and Deirmuesim, for instance, in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1155 and 1158.[58] Even the marshal of Jerusalem from 1125 to 1154, one of the most senior military positions in the country, was a certain Sado, or S'ad, who was a baron of the kingdom, in command of the Turcopole mounted archers and even, on occasion, Frankish knights.[59] Likewise, we know of a very long-standing and prominent local Christian family called the Arrabi, who were originally knights in the service of the lords of Ibelin. They first appear in a legal document dating back to 1122 but there were still Arrabi knights at Ibelin in the mid-1160s.[60] Interestingly, it is only because of their distinctive family name that we even know they were native Christians. The first of the family that we are aware of was called Muisse (or Moses) but they quickly adopted Frankish names: his brother was called Baldwin and his son was called George. Similarly, his four grandchildren by George were all given western names: Henry, Peter, John and Maria. Given that leading local Christians such as this tended to Frankicise their names, there are certainly others of whom we are unaware, even within the few records that do survive.[61]

There are also several instances in the Principality of Antioch of local Christians having been listed as 'milites', or knights. Among the 'milites' of the lordship of Marqab we find some names such as 'lord' Zacharias and we find a 'Zacharias' listed as the castellan of Marqab, the commander of the garrison, in 1182 and 1183. In 1186 we find another list of some of the knights of Marqab, and most of them seem to be local Christians, rather than Franks.[62] Not far away, in the County of Tripoli, we find a lord 'David the Syrian' in control of a cave fortress and associated lands in the Lebanese mountains until 1142, presumably in command of a native Christian garrison and the local militia.[63]

Large numbers of the Frankish cavalry arm, even the majority on occasion, were Turcopoles. While evidence regarding recruitment issues is famously vague in this area, as we shall see, it seems that most of them were of native Christian origin in one form or another. As with the infantry, we have little firm evidence as to the proportion of the cavalry who were native Christians, but we do know that they were present and that they were generally fighting in large numbers.

All non-knightly troops, whether European-born, Frankish settlers or native Christians, tend to be taken for granted and given a low profile in the chronicles. The knights were the celebrities, and their

exploits were worthy of note. Infantry, on the other hand, tended to be grouped together, as 'arrow fodder', if they were even mentioned at all. Interestingly though, in the rare instances where we do hear of native soldiers, they are not referred to in a way which is anything other than 'normal'. They seem not to have been regarded as high-quality troops but that may be largely attributable to ethnic or social bias. It is generally taken for granted, however, that readers would naturally understand that they had a significant role to play in the military.

Local Christians also played a very prominent part in garrisoning the many castles that were dotted around the crusader states. The rock-cut castle of the Cave de Sueth (Ain al-Habis, or Habis Jaldak) is an interesting case in point, and shows how entire units of the 'Frankish' army were in fact sometimes made up of local Christians. The castle had long been the centre of a condominium with the local Muslim authorities. As William of Tyre wrote, the 'district was nearer to the enemy's domains than to our realm . . . Yet, because of the protection afforded by this fortress, the custom had prevailed for many years and was still in practice at this time of dividing the powers equally between the Christians and the infidels; the taxes and tribute were also divided equally between them.'[64]

In 1182, a Turkic Muslim force put the cave fortress under siege and captured it within five days. This was shocking news, as the castle was traditionally viewed as 'a very strongly fortified place. It was thought to be impregnable.'[65]

Accusations were soon flying round about how the disaster happened. According to William of Tyre's version of events, the Muslims had 'forced an entrance into the cave from the side by mining, a feat which could easily be accomplished since the rock was of chalky nature. They burrowed into the first storey and seized it; then after taking that, they compelled the surrender of those in the middle and top storeys.' The prevailing view, however, was that the loss of the castle was made possible by treachery, and it is only at this point, and only because of the coincidence of this unfortunate incident, that we learn that the entire garrison were native Christians. As William wrote, the 'enemy gained possession of the cave through the treachery of the officers in charge. For, although the rest wished to make resistance, those in authority forbade any defence to be made, and after surrendering they themselves deserted to the enemy. The commanders in charge were, it is said, Syrians [Syri].'[66]

There are several important points to note here. First, with local native Christian commanders, it is extremely unlikely that the garrison serving under them were of Frankish origin. Second, it is clear that the garrison themselves were keen to keep fighting, and that they only

surrendered when they were ordered to do so. On a defensive level, at least, these native Christians, the ordinary soldiers in the garrison, were acknowledged as having military value. They may not have been elite troops, but they were recognised as having an important contribution to make in a society desperately short of soldiers.

The two different versions of events are by no means incompatible. It is entirely possible that the local commanders, having already endured a siege of five days, and with Muslim storming parties already occupying one floor of the castle, realised, probably correctly, that they were about to be overwhelmed and decided to begin negotiations while they still had some leverage: if negotiations began too late in the course of a siege, a massacre would become inevitable. Taking refuge with the enemy after surrender inevitably looked bad but may also have been a sensible precaution on their part. At around the same time, we find a Templar garrison being hanged as a punishment for surrendering their castle: if that was the fate of elite, high-ranking Frankish troops, the native commanders at the Cave de Sueth were probably not mistaken in feeling that they would be safer in Damascus.

William was explicit in saying that the garrison were Syrians, rather than, say, Armenians. As an intelligent commentator, born and brought up in the region, he certainly knew the difference, and made the distinction clear on many other occasions in his Chronicles. He is therefore clearly stating that native Christians, local Arabs, were in the Frankish army, presumably in some numbers, in this case in a fixed, defensive role. Lastly, and most importantly, is the fact that we only hear about this by accident. As always, the non-knightly elements of the army have a low profile. It is very telling that William does not mention the ethnic origins of the garrison as being surprising in any way. Rather, he assumes that the reader will already be aware of the polyglot nature of the army. The only surprise he registers is the status-driven criticism that the local lord would appoint native Christian commanders, not that the mass of the garrison were such.

Whereas modern perceptions of crusader armies would tend to characterise them as white, Catholic and intolerant, William knew that the truth was different, and he took for granted that his readers would know that too. This was an army unit whose commands would have been given in Arabic, and whose appearance would have probably have been a hybrid of eastern and western traditions, with Frankish weapons perhaps, but also with many items of traditional Arab clothing and headgear. This was a significant part of the normal ‘crusader’ army which William and his readers saw around them every day.

Our understanding of the scale of the local Christian population in the Latin East and their relations with the Franks has been greatly improved over the past twenty years. It now appears that, taken as a whole, the majority of the population in the crusader states were Christian. There were naturally regional variations, such as the large number of Muslim villages around Acre.[67] But even in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, where the density of the Muslim population initially seems to have been greatest, large numbers of peasants fled once the crusaders arrived. Similarly, much of the Muslim population of the coastal cities emigrated to Egypt or Syria once they were besieged and the ports brought back into Christian control by the Franks. We also now know that relations between the Franks and local Christian communities were far more cooperative than has often been represented in the past.

This still leaves questions about the size of the Frankish population unanswered. It was clearly better to have a stable, native Christian population than a demilitarised and sullen Muslim peasantry. But the crusader armies also needed as many new recruits as possible from local Christian communities. The size of the Frankish population was extremely small to start off with, so steps needed to be taken to increase the numbers of individuals and families arriving from the west. And, once they had reached the Holy Land, what they found there needed to be attractive enough to stop them returning to Europe when, as would inevitably happen, things got tough.[68]

The scale of the manpower requirements cannot be underestimated. As ever, the evidence for the upper echelons of society is far more robust than that for other social groups. It is also the case that mortality rates are almost certainly not consistent, as each group was subject to different variables. Knights and nobles, for instance, had access to better nutrition and health care. They were also more likely than most other soldiers to be held for ransom if they were captured, rather than being killed out of hand. But even here the mortality rates were appalling. Quite apart from the casualties incurred in the course of the First Crusade, as the armies slowly fought their way across Asia Minor and Syria, the knightly survivors, numbered in hundreds rather than thousands, then had to face the dangers of a seemingly never-ending series of battles to expand or defend their new conquests.[69]

The numbers of knights available in the Latin East grew only very slowly. There seem to have been no more than 250 knights at any given time during the first years of the kingdom of Jerusalem. When King Baldwin I collected his men and set out on an expedition down to the desert regions on the Egyptian border at the end of 1100, we

are told that his entire field army consisted of only 'one hundred and fifty knights and fifty infantry'.[70] Crusaders continued to arrive from the west but the situation was not helped by the high mortality rates experienced by the newcomers. Knights may have had the best protection in battle and access to the best available medical care if they fell ill, but that was often small comfort. Local diseases took a dreadful toll and every time the enemy went into battle the small number of elite heavy cavalry were inevitably in the forefront of the fighting. Even in a battle that was won, casualties among such a small group might be hard to bear. When battles were lost, however, such as at the second battle of Ramla in 1102, losses were catastrophic. Many senior positions in the Latin Kingdom were filled by individuals who we hear of once or twice, and are then quickly replaced by an equally short-lived successor.[71]

The lack of knights, and the urgent need to find heavy cavalry replacements for them, was reflected throughout the army as a whole. Every effort had to be made to increase the Christian population in order to build a sustainable pool of manpower available for military service. One obvious solution was to grow the Frankish population by increasing the number of settled 'European' families in the region.

Under the old paradigm of crusader demographics, of course, this would never have been possible. The Franks, so the theory went, were a small group of oppressors, holed up in their castles and fortified towns, rarely coming out to mingle with the Muslim or 'heretical' Christian communities that surrounded them. In fact, quite the opposite seems to have been the case. Archaeological breakthroughs since the early 1990s have created a vastly different picture of the rural population in the kingdom of Jerusalem. Far from being isolated, the Franks had a very substantial colonisation programme in place, often in partnership with local Christian communities, starting in the early years of the kingdom and picking up pace as the threat posed by the Egyptian army receded after the first two decades of the twelfth century.

Ironically, one of the most telling clues as to how we should visualise crusader armies is contained in one of the least visual sources: an obscure legal record from 1114, referring back to the events of 1099 or 1100.[72] The document confirms an agreement between Duke Godfrey and the monks of the Holy Sepulchre, in which he gave them huge swathes of land and twenty-one villages in a strategically important area to the north of Jerusalem. These villages were to be used for the settlement of some of the remaining soldiers of the First Crusade and their families. If men were to be encouraged to stay, they needed to have something to stay for. They were given land to farm and homes of their own. They were also given a new status,

something to increase their commitment to their young state: all were now free men, regardless of whatever kind of serfdom or servitude they had been subjected to in Europe.

But, most importantly of all, they also had to have the emotional attachment and practical support of building new families. We know that there were women on the First Crusade, but mortality rates on the march across Asia Minor had been high. Most of the female survivors, like the men, soon went back to the west. So many, probably most, of the wives at the heart of these new families and communities were local Arab Christians. Their children were of mixed race and, from the 1120s onwards, as the offspring of the new settlers came of military age, we need to visualise even the 'Frankish' elements of crusader armies as being far more ethnically diverse than has generally been presumed. Godfrey's agreement with the monks of the Holy Sepulchre was just the beginning of a huge colonisation programme. But far from being isolated 'white settlers', the soldiers provided by these settlements were always culturally integrated into the local region.

Even beyond the settlement programme, large numbers of marriages with local women took place at all levels of the social spectrum, from the royal family downwards. Over time, this would create a significant new 'local Frankish' population. This was distinctive enough to eventually cause friction with later generations of crusaders arriving from Europe. Arguments among Frankish forces in the aftermath of the failed siege of Damascus in 1148, for instance, or after the defeat at Hattin in 1187, reflected not just differences in military opinion but also elements of cultural and racial prejudice against the 'pulani', as the Frankish or semi-Frankish population of the crusader states became known.

In fact, Frankish colonisation was widespread and, by the standards of the age, extremely sophisticated: more organised, better structured and carried out on a far bigger scale than previously imagined. This was an increasingly intensive colonisation. Within the kingdom of Jerusalem alone, there are 235 Frankish rural sites that we now know of.[73] By the time the kingdom was overrun in the aftermath of the battle of Hattin in 1187 we find a large rural complex of Frankish villages and small towns, large estates, fortified and unfortified farmhouses and manor houses. There was investment in new roads, and widespread interaction and cooperation with the local Christians. The nature of this colonisation process meant that there were close economic and social ties, often of marriage, with local people and, for the more isolated communities, there were shared churches and shared worship. These were communities of mixed-race 'Frankish' yeoman farmers, men prepared to fight for their land as

they had nowhere else to go.[74]

The dislocation that followed Saladin's successful invasion of 1187 makes this all seem rather unreal. We no longer see Frankish communities on the ground in the region, so we instinctively assume they were never there. But at the time, Frankish settlement was increasingly dense and prosperous and the Christian communities of Palestine and Syria were once more on the ascendant. It was only the accident of defeat that consigned this entire society to history.

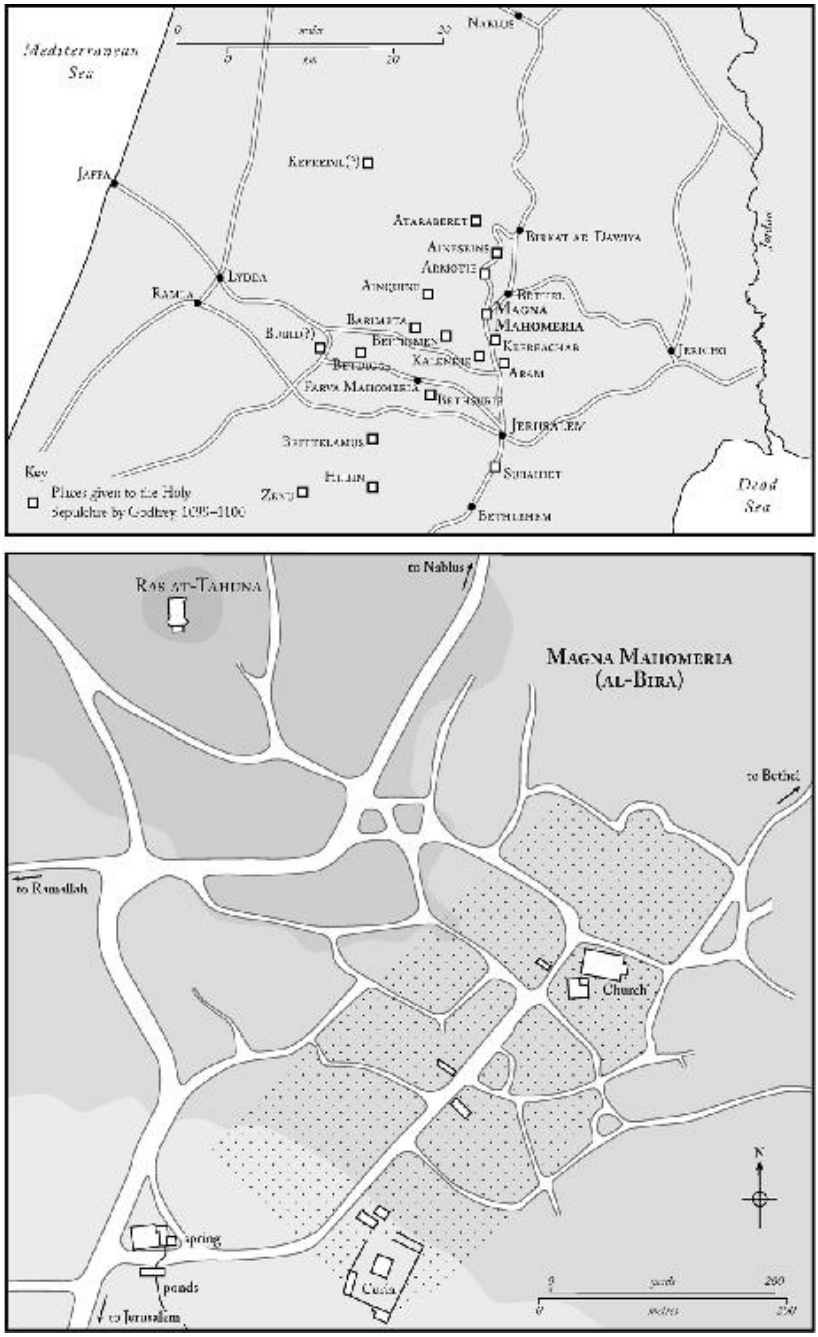
There are numerous examples of these well-established settlements, and the sophisticated facilities and economic structures that they created. The large Frankish village of Sanjil, north of Jerusalem, on the road to Nablus is one such instance of planned colonisation. Sanjil (or 'Castrum Sancti Egidii') is already being referred to by its Latin name by 1143 at the latest, a reference that was presumed by contemporaries to refer to Raymond of St Gilles and his army's (possible) presence there in 1099.[75] It was fortified, and had two towers for local security within it. The settlement had its own church to cater for the needs of the inhabitants and the outlying farms, and its fortifications provided the protection local farmers needed from nomads, bandits or Muslim raiders.[76] The extraordinary extent and intensity of the local colonisation is shown by the fact that we are aware of no fewer than eight other Frankish rural sites within walking distance of the village. The lord of the village was required to provide three knights to the royal army, but the full military potential of the village, including militia, sergeants, Turcopoles and so on, was far greater.[77] Settlements such as this would have provided the backbone of the larger Frankish armies that we see towards the end of the twelfth century.[78]

The case of the Frankish settlement at Magna Mahomeria, situated just north of Jerusalem on the road to Nablus, provides another good example of this 'yeoman militia', though, as in so many instances, we only know of its military resources by coincidence. All the other settlements had their own stories to tell, but we do not know now what those stories were.[79] By 1124 the colony of Magna Mahomeria was described as a small village ('viculus'), but it was already semi-fortified. Egyptian forces based in Ascalon raided the area while the Frankish field army was engaged in the siege of Tyre and, as Fulcher of Chartres wrote, they 'carried off all the petty plunder they found there, along with their dead and many wounded. The women and children got into a certain tower built there in our time [i.e. by the Franks] and thus saved themselves.'[80]

The raid served as a warning that the defences needed to be improved and by 1128, just four years later, we find the settlement being referred to as a 'castrum', though it is perhaps more realistic to

envisage it as a fortified rural settlement rather than as a substantial castle.[81] We know that its inhabitants served in the army when the situation required, as did those of other settlements, but we also have sad evidence specific to Magna Mahomeria which shows the extent of their involvement, and the tragic consequences for the families within the settlement.

In the winter of 1170, Saladin invaded the south of the kingdom of Jerusalem and besieged the castle of Darum.[82] King Amalric mustered as many troops as he could, both his 'regular' feudal contingents, and men from the local Frankish towns and villages. The main Christian field army seems to have gathered at the Templar castle of Gaza and set out from there to try to relieve Darum. An infantry contingent from Magna Mahomeria had arrived to join the army, but as King Amalric and his men had already moved out, they were retained as part of the garrison at Gaza until such time as it became possible to join the general muster. William of Tyre wrote that they were 'a company of sixty-five light-armed youths, valiant fighters, natives of a town called Mahumaria, near Jerusalem. They had arrived that very night at Gaza on their way to join the army and . . . had been assigned to the gate of the outer city'.[83] The main Frankish army forced their way through to Darum but, shocked by the numbers of the Muslim army they encountered, they were forced to take up defensive positions in the town, while Saladin bypassed them and moved on to attack the more extensive settlement and castle at Gaza.



Plan 1 Magna Mahomeria and its Environs
Source: After Barber 2012, p. 228 and Pringle 1985, pp. 148, 150.

Given the relatively small size of most Frankish armies, a unit of sixty-five 'youths' was a very sizeable contribution, and no doubt there were other older men provided by Magna Mahomeria too, perhaps

moving faster because they were mounted and already with the royal army at Darum. If this military contribution was mirrored across the other Frankish settlements, and there is no reason to think why this would not be the case, the settlers were providing a very high proportion of the kingdom's soldiers, particularly the infantry. In the event, the castle of Gaza had a good chance of resisting a major army, at least for a while, but the walls of the outer town could not hold out for long.

The young men of Magna Mahomeria were still in position, defending the gate to which they had been assigned, when the enemy broke into the city along the walls in between the gate and the citadel. The Frankish youths were cut off from the rest of the garrison when:

> the infidels broke into the place from another direction between the citadel and the gate . . . They made a sudden attack from the rear on the little band which was still stoutly defending the gate and completely surrounded them. Thus taken by surprise, the latter were unable to resist longer and perished by the sword. Although many of these valiant youths were slain and still more wounded, yet the enemy did not retire from this encounter unscathed, for theirs was a bloody victory.[84]

We only know of their presence in the army at all because of the disaster that befell them, and because they were operating as a separate unit at the time rather than being more fully integrated, as they would normally be. Particularly in the 1170s and 1180s, as the kingdom of Jerusalem was thrown onto the defensive, contingents of farmers and artisans from Frankish settlements across the kingdom would be called on to defend their land.

Colonisation was not evenly spread across the Latin kingdom, however, and this was not coincidental. There were areas where a Muslim population remained in situ under crusader rule, notably in central Samaria and parts of the region around Mount Hebron. Frankish settlements tended to avoid locations close to these communities, presumably for cultural and security reasons. Similarly, there were very few Frankish settlers (or indeed settlers of any kind) in areas which were prone to intensive infiltration by nomads.[85] In eastern Galilee, for instance, an area increasingly destabilised over time and where sedentary communities, Muslim and Christian alike, were under threat, we find no Frankish settlers other than those sitting in the shadow of large castles. Security was always a major consideration, even in relatively peaceful times.

While rural settlements could provide men for the field army, many colonies were deliberately established alongside castles. These sites had a symbiotic relationship. The castle provided security for the local population, and in return they could help boost the garrison in time of war, as well as providing a trading and commercial

infrastructure in peacetime. At Castellum Regis, for instance, about 10km north-east of Acre, we find a castle and a new settlement, and attempts were made to settle Franks and possibly native Christians in an adjacent colony.[86] In addition to the defences of the castle itself, the settlement was surrounded by a wall some 8–10m high.[87]

There were also many other castles where local Frankish settlements were at hand to help in emergencies, and for mutual protection.[88] Kerak and Montréal in the Transjordan each had their own Christian civil communities, both Frankish and eastern Christian. Kerak had been built in 1142 and was pre-dated by the native Christian settlement adjacent to it. As William of Tyre wrote when the town and castle were attacked by Saladin in 1171, the 'village outside was situated on the slope of the hill . . . The inhabitants were all Christians and therefore more reliance could be placed upon them.'[89] The local countryside was likewise predominantly Christian. When, in November 1183, Saladin besieged Kerak again and broke into the town, the mass of the population was forced into the citadel in great numbers because 'many Syrians with their wives and children had come in from the surrounding country. The place was so filled with them that those who wished to pass back and forth could not do so freely on account of the dense crowds.'[90]

The sheer intensity of the Frankish settlement programme brought military advantages with it, providing men and supplies for the Christian armies. It also meant that the Franks had much more to lose in these territories, however, and that vulnerability brought its own disadvantages. All of Saladin's major invasion paths of the 1170s and 1180s seem geared, among other things, to create maximum devastation among the colonies. In 1173, for instance, he launched his attack from Egypt to threaten the Frankish settlements at Gaza and Darum. In the early 1180s, he invaded the Oultrejourdain several times, each time devastating the local Christian communities, particularly around Kerak. And in the grand invasions of 1183 and 1187 his armies made a point of laying waste the Frankish settlements in Lower Galilee. From his perspective, this was an effective way of undermining the Frankish war effort.

Beyond that, however, it also acted as a major provocation to a proud Frankish leadership, desperate to protect their people and villages: anything Saladin could do to cause the Christian armies to behave rashly, to bring their outnumbered field armies into battle under unfavourable circumstances, was a great strategic lever. In 1183 the Franks failed to take the bait, but the accompanying blow to the prestige of Guy of Lusignan, their leader, caused his temporary removal from command. When faced again with Muslim raiders torching Frankish settlements across Galilee in 1187, Guy was goaded

into exactly the kind of rash response that Saladin had been hoping for. Ironically, the success of the Frankish rural colonisation process contributed to its own destruction.

As well as a growing number of Frankish villages and small towns, there was also an increasingly large European population in each of the main coastal cities. Again, as the century progressed, and as a greater degree of stability was introduced into the region, particularly from around 1125 to 1170, it became easier to attract new urban settlers. The opportunities for high-value trade were significant, and the coastal cities of the eastern Mediterranean became the new commercial hubs between east and west. This money attracted people from Europe, including large numbers from the Italian city states, with their heritage and expertise in seaborne trade. Active commercial communities from Pisa, Venice, Genoa and other European trading centres made the coastal cities of Palestine increasingly attractive for settlers of all kinds. The Italian communities in the east were variable in nature: some were seasonal visitors, some in permanent residence, and some, like the Genoese Embriaco family, even became castle-owning nobility, with feudal military obligations running alongside their commercial interests. But whether permanent residents or just passing through, the Italian connection provided access to money, shipping and commercial expertise: they kept the lifeline to Europe open and provided money and material for the war effort.[91]

And even beyond the Italian communities, the coastal cities created money and manpower in their own right, generating an increased capacity to attract and retain mercenaries from other parts of the Middle East and Europe. The urban populations were very significant for this period. All figures are only estimates, and would inevitably have varied over time, but on a nominal basis of 125 individuals per hectare the cities of the Latin East were sophisticated and substantial communities: Antioch would have had over 40,000 inhabitants and Edessa about 25,000. By medieval standards, the larger coastal cities, such as Acre or Tyre, were also major conurbations, with their own suburbs and a substantial local population. Ironically, Jerusalem, the focus of so much religious and political energy, was the exception. With little intrinsic strategic value or commercial impetus beyond religious tourism, the Holy City had a much smaller population, perhaps some 15,000 people, and even much of that was prone to seasonal variation as visitors came and went according to the religious calendar and the shipping winds.[92]

Less predictable but nonetheless helpful, were the large numbers of pilgrims or crusader groups who came to the east. The difference between ‘pilgrims’ and more formally armed ‘crusaders’ was less profound than one might imagine. A pilgrim who had a sword, or who

was given a crossbow, could become a useful military asset. And many of those whom we tend to think of as being on a military expedition, as crusaders, were as devout as unarmed pilgrims. Most would arrive at one of the larger coastal cities, such as Acre, but then head inland towards the places of pilgrimage. Jerusalem at Easter was a particular focus of attention, and many would then proceed up to the River Jordan, under the watchful eye of the Templar patrols and castles on the route. Some might stay permanently, but most did not. While they were there, however, they were a potentially useful source of manpower and could often be coaxed or conscripted into helping in times of emergency.[93]

A Different People: The Population of the Crusader States

So, what are we to deduce from all this? Well, fundamentally, it appears that most of the population of the crusader states in the twelfth century were still Christian despite the length of time that had elapsed since Muslim armies had first invaded: they were a small majority, but a majority nonetheless. Some areas certainly had a Muslim majority, and others had a low density of overall population due to the instability created by chronic nomadic incursions, such as in eastern Galilee. But across the board, the crusader states still had a largely Christian population. In Antioch and Edessa, the two northern crusader states, Christians were perhaps two-thirds of the population, though relatively few of these (maybe some 10 per cent or less) were of Frankish extraction. Further south, in the County of Tripoli and the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, perhaps just under half the population was Christian, of whom the Franks were a minority (albeit a bigger minority than in the north).[94]

This is, of course, only a very tentative approximation. Even at the time no one knew the exact proportions and, as we have seen, estimates given by contemporaries vary widely, partly depending on their religious perspective and partly on the geographical context. Ibn Jubayr, travelling around Banyas and Acre in 1184, spoke of largely Muslim communities, and in that region he may well have been correct.[95] The population also changed over time. The proportion of the Frankish population in the kingdom of Jerusalem was tiny at the beginning of the century, for instance, but had become far more significant by the 1180s. Nonetheless, given what we now know about Frankish settlements and the size of urban populations, combined with our better understanding of local Christian communities, this gives a plausible sense of the broad distribution of the population.

The rulers of the crusader states were never a highly ideological group, defined by their race or the zealotry of their religion. They did not impose an intolerant tyranny on the majority of the population.

Instead, most of the population were Christian, in smaller numbers than they were when the Islamic invasions first took place, but nonetheless still a small majority, and generally enjoying harmonious relations with the increasingly ethnically intermixed 'Frankish' population.

Religious and ethnic bigotry inevitably existed on all sides, but the differences between the communities were never as profound or as clear-cut as we might imagine. Many of the local (non-Frankish) Christians, probably most of those who were not Armenian, spoke Arabic as their native language. All of the local Christian communities shared much in terms of appearance, language and culture with their Muslim neighbours. It was easy, for instance, for Muslim spies to infiltrate Frankish armies, precisely because all the local peoples had so much in common, regardless of religious beliefs: 'Some pretended to be Greeks, some Syrians, and others Armenians, and all could easily assume the characteristics of such nations in idioms, manners and dress.'[96] With local Franks living in rural communities, intermarrying with their fellow Christians, often worshipping in the same shared churches and serving in the same army units together, the melding of different ethnic and religious groups was pervasive.

It is important to bear in mind that the crusader states existed in a complex, multifaceted region and that had profound implications for Frankish armies. If we saw a small crusader force, for instance, it would probably be unrecognisable from the Victorian clichés of valiant knights and sergeants. Instead, we would be faced with the sights and smells (never underestimate the smells), of the medieval Middle East. The voices talking and shouting, perhaps in Armenian or Syriac. The lower-level commands being issued perhaps in Arabic and what we would now call medieval French. Maybe there would even be a smattering of Turkic in the ranks, depending on the provenance of the Turcopoles or other local light cavalry mercenaries. Turbans would have been worn to keep the heat of the sun off the helmets. Bedouin scouts would be bringing back news of enemy troop movements, reporting in Arabic, regardless of whether they were Muslim or Christian. Bad-tempered camels or donkeys were in the baggage train, handled by increasingly frustrated Syrians shouting abuse at them in local dialects. All a far cry from Sir Walter Scott, and none of it feasible without a very pragmatic dose of religious tolerance.

The 'crusader' armies of the Middle East in the twelfth century often had relatively few genuine crusaders in them. After the first couple of decades, the majority of the Franks were mixed-race local settlers, many, perhaps most of whom had never set foot in the west: Europe was just a faraway land, somewhere they had heard of as a

tale of their own ‘Outremer’, part of a childhood story. And in many crusader armies even these local Franks were in a minority, marching in units with Armenian-speaking comrades, or with other native Christian soldiers. As we shall see, most ‘Islamic’ armies were built around foreign troops, brought in from outside of the region (many of whom were not even Muslims), rather than the indigenous communities. None of the armies of the crusader period corresponded to the easy caricatures painted of them.

The Soldiers

In 1147 a Frankish attempt to take the town of Bosra ended in complete failure. The army retreated under the most difficult circumstances but, at a time when morale was at its lowest, spirits were raised by the exploits of one particularly brash cavalryman. William of Tyre tells us that 'a certain knight' broke ranks (contrary to their instructions) and charged towards the enemy. He struck a Muslim emir with a spear and then followed this up by running him through with his sword. He came back to the crusaders' lines accompanied by loud cheers, but facing disciplinary action for having disobeyed orders.

The moral of the story, from William's point of view, was to explain how the knight's success was sufficient for him to get away with infringing army discipline, and how he avoided punishment 'rather because of the result, than because it was right'.[1] Far more surprising for a modern reader, however, is the line of defence with which the soldier escaped censure: he was Turkic, and could not understand Frankish commands.

Just as most aspects of Frankish warfare, from grand strategy down to the minutiae of tactical manoeuvres, were deceptively different from European practice, so too were the troops with whom that warfare was conducted. What we perhaps think of as archetypically 'European' armies were actually very different on the ground.[2]

When looking at different kinds of troops, it is important to resist the temptation to be overly rigid or definitive. These were desperate times, with manpower in short supply. There have been lengthy debates, for example, about whether a 'sergeant' was a mounted soldier or an infantryman. In practice, we can find instances of both, as both were needed. The way men were used was largely dictated by need, availability and skills, rather than by a manual. If cavalry were in short supply, or if the army was expected to be on campaign for a long period and over extended distances, any sergeant who had a

horse, or who could be provided with one, would doubtless have gone mounted. If fighting nearer home, on the other hand, a sergeant with a crossbow and expertise in how to use it would have been deployed on foot.

Mercenaries had begun to specialise depending on their preferences and expertise, and the availability of equipment. Some, for instance, were equipped and trained to ride in the second rank of the charge, supporting the knights. Others would have specialised in the use of bow or spear. Similarly, there has been a lot of discussion about the ethnicity of the Turcopole recruits in Frankish armies, but it is hard to imagine the circumstances in which a man with the skills to make a good mounted archer would be turned away, regardless of his ethnic origins or denominational preferences.

The kinds of troops involved would also inevitably depend on the type of actions envisaged and the men available at the time. There was no uniform, 'one size fits all', Frankish army. A long-range patrol in the desert areas south of Kerak or Darum, for instance, would have had a higher than usual proportion of cavalry, particularly lighter cavalry, and would have included local Bedouin guides and auxiliaries, some of whom would probably have been riding on camels. Any infantry on the patrol would perhaps have been mounted on mules or other lower-value baggage animals. A frontier garrison might have been a small but relatively professional group, probably with a disproportionate number of crossbowmen. Similarly, a force that had to move fast to relieve a castle or go to the aid of another crusader state would have had more mounted men and a high proportion of 'regular' and 'professional' troops in it (though both terms need to be used in a less demanding, medieval way, rather than in a modern context).

At the opposite end of the spectrum, in the case of a local incursion all able-bodied men might be called up for emergency defence, at least until non-combatants could be taken to a place of safety. This scratch defence force would be reinforced or relieved as soon as possible by regional troops led by the local nobility or the nearest troops from the garrisons of the military orders. And if a full-scale invasion was under way, as was increasingly the case in the 1170s and 1180s, the size of the army would increase, but with inevitable compromises with regard to the expertise and training of those who were mobilised.

It is important to look at different categories of troops within the armies of the crusader states, but we need to be continually aware that any definitions we might try to impose would have been far more flexible in practice, and subject to major variation.

Knights

Knights were the celebrities of Frankish society and the main battle tanks of the army. They shared some of the characteristics of both. Small in number and extremely high profile, they could win a battle in minutes, even when facing seemingly overwhelming odds. But there were other similarities too. Like celebrities, they could be fragile and fractious. And like main battle tanks, they were few in number and strangely brittle: vulnerable if they were not carefully supported or if their attack was launched under adverse conditions.

The knight was an expensive but highly trained and adaptable weapons system. They could be deployed on horseback or on foot, using a lance in the charge, a sword or mace in close combat, or perhaps, less commonly, wielding a crossbow or bow during a siege. The knight was versatile and an excellent all-round warrior but he could deliver most value for money in the shock of impact. When dismounted as an armoured infantryman, they became a solid and reliable fixed point for an army. But there were many other infantrymen who were almost as good in that role, and far less expensive. Where the knight excelled, where he was unique, was in the charge. It was in the charge that he could, if everything went well, win the battle.

Luckily for Saladin and the others who faced them, there were never many knights available at any given time. They were formidable but expensive. A primarily rural economy with limited economic surplus could never support as many knights as were needed to defend the Holy Land. Every effort was made to force fief-holders to fulfil military obligations even when they were personally unable to do so. Widows had to pay for mercenaries. The disabled and the elderly had to hand over their horses and armour to someone who could do the job for them.[3]

Over time, the strain started to show. In 1150, for instance, when Baldwin III needed to go to the aid of Edessa, many of his noblemen in the south of the kingdom refused a series of personal summonses from the king to join the muster. This was partly because of tensions between the king and his mother, Queen Melisende, but also a reflection of the resentment engendered by the remorseless personal demands of chronic warfare across the entire region.[4] The unremitting nature of crusading warfare had a disproportionate impact on the knights, whose small numbers and vital battlefield role meant that they were called upon to campaign and fight with appalling frequency.

We have a fascinating list of knightly service owed to the king of Jerusalem by the leading fief-holders. The ‘servitia debita’ lists of John of Ibelin were written around 1265 but internal details suggest that they set out the state of affairs in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem at

some time between 1183 and 1186. The lists are beguiling. On one level they seem to be a full review of the knights available to the king, divided into each of their feudal contingents. They also seem to be relatively accurate, and on one level they are. But that is misleading: they are perhaps better viewed as a legal document, setting out the rights and obligations of the nobility, rather than as a muster sheet for the military.[5]

The list shows that the range of knightly service due to the king varied enormously, depending on the size and economic value of the fief. At the top end of the scale the largest of the lordships, the major baronies, such as Sidon, Galilee and the County of Jaffa and Ascalon, each owed the service of 100 knights. At the opposite end were the fifty-eight fief-holders who owed the service of just one knight: unless they were too old or too sick, they would probably have served in person.[6]

If everyone fulfilled their obligations the total number of knights was around 675.[7] We do not have comparable lists for the other crusader states, but the Principality of Antioch seems to have had a broadly similar level of knightly service. When Roger of Antioch went into battle at Ager Sanguinis in 1119, without waiting for help from the other Frankish armies, his knightly contingent was said to be some 700 strong. The County of Tripoli was always smaller and had a more limited number of knights. The County of Edessa was similarly smaller in scale, and even this contingent was dramatically reduced after the loss of much of its lands in 1144 (with the county being completely lost by 1150).

On the basis of these legal obligations, the combined total of the feudal knightly contingents available across all four of the crusader states amounted to just 2,000 men: approximately 700 each from Jerusalem and Antioch, with Edessa and Tripoli perhaps having access to another 300 men each. These figures are not necessarily a minimum: there were always bound to be some knights who were too ill to attend a muster, some who were too old, or who were prisoners of war.

In practice, however, the lists almost certainly underestimate the number of knights available. On the few occasions when we come across details about the composition of feudal contingents in the field, the numbers are invariably different. In 1158, for instance, the future King Amalric arranged for fifteen men to act as witnesses for a legal document. Ten of these were described as vassals, who would naturally have been included on a list such as that compiled by John of Ibelin. A further five knights, however, were described as retainers (‘stipendarii’) who would not have been. Similarly, in 1232 Balian, son of John of Beirut, was reported as riding into battle with a unit of

five knights. Of these, only two knights (Philip of Novara and Raymond of Fiace) were his vassals. The others were household retainers who had been knighted by Balian (Robert of Maumeni and Eudes of La Fierte) and a highly regarded mercenary (Peter of Montolif). In both instances, where we have a list of knights, there are significant numbers present who were not direct vassals (and who therefore would not appear on any traditional service lists). Additional knights were clearly being used to bolster the size of feudal contingents by those who could afford to do so.[8]

The requirements of feudal service were extremely demanding. A knight could be asked to fight for a full year if the homeland had been invaded, in what was effectively full-time conscription, or for four months if required to serve beyond its borders or when going to the aid of other crusader states. Feudal service meant that a knight was expected to serve until he was 60, though over the age of 40 he could provide another knight to deputise in his place. In an age of low life expectancy, in which warfare was brutal and dependent on muscle and endurance, the military elite were continually expected to justify their status. Being a knight in the Frankish east was never a sinecure. This unprecedented level of commitment, with all the hardships and danger that went with it, was inevitably unpopular from time to time. There were occasional undercurrents of unrest, normally after several consecutive years of distant campaigning. Yet outright refusals to serve were surprisingly rare. Ultimately, the interests of the men defending the Holy Land were aligned: their continued survival always depended on effective military action, and there was little point complaining about it.[9]

Although, as we shall see, Frankish ‘crusader’ armies were different from their European counterparts in terms of how they functioned, they were very similar in terms of equipment. Indeed, as far as we know, much of the armaments used in the crusader states continued to be manufactured in Europe and, for most practical purposes, knightly armour was largely unchanged during most of the twelfth century.

The effectiveness of their armour and equipment was reflected in the sheer difficulty of trying to stop them. Anna Comnena, the Byzantine historian and princess, reflected the views of her father and the Byzantine military establishment when she wrote that the Franks’ ‘cuirasses and coats of mail made them almost, if not entirely invulnerable . . . [Frankish] armour consists of a tunic interwoven with iron rings linked one with another; the iron is of good quality, capable of resisting an arrow and giving good protection to the soldier’s body. This armour is supplemented by a shield . . .’[10] The quality of their protection meant that even in battle against very heavily armed opponents, casualties among the men could be

surprisingly light. Writing of the battle of Brémule in 1119, Orderic Vitalis tells us that 'in the battle of the two kings, in which about 900 knights were engaged, only three were killed. They were all clad in mail and spared each other on both sides, out of fear of God and fellowship in arms.'[11]

The Rule of the Templars (the twelfth-century 'best practice' guide to life in the order) makes it clear that knights of the period were extremely well equipped. The brothers had several layers of protection, a range of weapons for contact with the enemy and good horses to carry them. Each was a medieval armoury in microcosm. Rule 138 shows that their knights were equipped almost to the point of overkill, stating that:

> [each] knight brother of the convent should have three horses and one squire and a fourth horse and a second squire, if he has them, are at the discretion of the Master [of the Templars], and they should have . . . a hauberk [i.e. a coat of mail], iron hose, a helmet or chapeau de fer, a sword, a shield, a lance, a Turkish mace, a surcoat, arming jacket [a padded jerkin worn under the hauberk], mail shoes, and three knives.[12]

The head and face were always particularly vulnerable and received a great deal of attention. At the beginning of our period the helmets worn by the knights and many of the better armed infantry would be very familiar to us from the Bayeux tapestry and from a mass of other artistic representations. These conical helmets generally had a distinctive nasal bar to give some facial protection without detracting too much from visibility. They protected the head from enemy archery and most horizontal and downward sword thrusts. That very familiarity is a function of the universality of the design among heavily armoured European troops of the time, giving a deceptive sense of uniformity in a world without mass production techniques.[13] These helmets were worn over a mail coif, looking rather like an open-faced ski mask, which gave additional protection to the neck, face and throat. The coif could either be attached to the hauberk or worn as a separate item. A leather cap was worn underneath the coif and helmet, for comfort and as yet another layer of protection.[14]

This traditional conical helmet and nasal guard remained in use throughout the period but by the middle of the twelfth century we find other types emerging alongside it, as a number of round-topped or cylindrical helmet designs were gradually introduced. Most significantly, increasing efforts were made to protect the face, particularly important in light of the high volume of projectiles that were inevitably directed at the front ranks of any charge. Over time we find that the nasal guards became bigger, covering parts of the face as well as the nose. By 1170 we also see a more radical approach

to this same problem. Face guards began to appear on helmets, sometimes as an integral feature, and sometimes added on.[15]

The other core element of defensive equipment was the hauberk, the main body armour worn by a knight. It was an essential piece of equipment but it did not come cheap. A full suit of mail took a minimum of 140 hours of highly skilled labour to construct, in addition to the cost of the metal, itself hugely expensive in a pre-industrial society. The mail shirt was built up by adding row after row of rings, with the rivet heads facing outwards to avoid damage to the padded leather jerkin worn underneath. A mail hauberk and jerkin may not have made the wearer invulnerable, but they did provide excellent protection.[16]

The main objective was, of course, to prevent penetration by enemy projectiles or weapons, and it did so by trying to distribute the impact of any blow across as wide an area as possible. The larger the number of rings (and hence the higher the cost of the hauberk), the greater the extent to which the force could be dissipated. The other key variable was the weight and flexibility of the armour. Mail was a good way of ensuring that its wearer retained mobility, but if the rivets were made stronger and thicker, there would be an inevitable decrease in flexibility. The hauberk would reach down towards the knight's knees and would be split front and back to allow more comfortable riding. Most would have weighed around 25lbs and, with the weight distributed evenly across the shoulders, would not have presented too much of a problem for a fit soldier. But there was always a trade-off between cost, protection and mobility.[17]

At the upper end of the social scale, and for those with bigger budgets, there were additional refinements. By the time of the First Crusade, knightly hauberks commonly extended down to the wrists, but by the end of the century they often also included mailed gloves or mittens (also known as 'mufflers') for the hands. Mail leggings ('chausses') also seem to have become increasingly common among knights in the second half of the twelfth century.[18] This was not just a fashion statement. There were very practical reasons why one would want to cover any exposed limbs. The bodies of the doomed garrison at Jacob's Ford, destroyed by Saladin's forces in 1179, show a range of extremely unpleasant wounds, many of which were associated, not surprisingly, with the parts of the anatomy that were traditionally less well protected by armour. The surviving skeletal remains were found in the back of a burnt-out building within the castle, where some of the Templar soldiers gathered to make a final stand. As well as the usual arrow wounds that one would expect to find when facing Turcoman nomads, the bodies showed signs of traumatic wounds to the limbs. One sword cut was so devastating that the Frankish soldier

on the receiving end of it had his arm completely severed at the elbow. Another soldier had his lower jaw split into two, again, at a point where a nasal helmet would have offered less protection to its wearer. Defensive armour was always a wise investment if you could afford it.[19]

The large kite shield provided yet another layer of protection, particularly along the front and left side of the charging knight. It gave a good degree of cover for the left leg and the effectiveness of the shield may go at least part of the way towards explaining why mail leggings were not universally worn in the early part of our period. The shields were made of a leather covering on top of a wooden backing, reinforced by a metal boss in the middle and metal strips around the edges of the shield. The kite shield was also curved along its primary axis and partially wrapped around the soldier carrying it, giving him even greater protection. This remained the dominant knightly shield design throughout the twelfth century, although the curved top of the shield became less pronounced as the century progressed.[20]

Ironically, the most striking difference between a knight arriving at Jerusalem in 1099 and a knight fighting at Hattin in 1187 is the one we know least about. From the mid-twelfth century onwards we find knights wearing long, often sleeveless, fabric garments over their hauberks. This fashion was so popular that it must have brought benefits to those who adopted it. But there is still some speculation about what those benefits might have been. A partial explanation is the weather. A mail hauberk is never easy to wear but is significantly less comfortable under the desert sun or in a rainstorm. The surcoat may have originated in the Frankish armies of the Holy Land, as they copied the example of their Muslim opponents and adopted a loose-fitting and light-coloured covering for their body armour. This would have had the effect of simultaneously deflecting the sun's rays and creating a breeze between the surcoat and their body armour. Similarly, for knights based in western Europe, a surcoat treated with animal fats may have provided a welcome element of waterproofing.[21]

There were other, less tangible but nonetheless helpful benefits as well, however. The introduction of visors and full-faced helmets in the second half of the twelfth century led to greater protection for the face, particularly against enemy archery, but there was always a compromise between facial protection and visibility. In a mêlée a visor slit could easily be knocked to one side, making an already impaired visibility even worse and, with both hands fully occupied, it was very difficult to make adjustments. The surcoat allowed individualised patterns and bold colours to be incorporated in a knight's appearance, creating a unique 'branding' and heightening visibility. This, combined with distinctive shield designs, aided

visibility and unit cohesion, perhaps by increasing recognition of where one needed to form up or, in conjunction with standards, where one needed to regroup. It saved lives by encouraging opponents to pause and consider the possibility of ransom, rather than just cutting the throat of a fallen knight. Perhaps even more importantly for this ever competitive social elite, the surcoat increased visibility among one's peer group: the point of great deeds of valour was having someone to see them and talk about them. Reputation among the knights was everything.[22]

As we have seen, the knights were equipped with a range of weapons. The lance was the preferred weapon for the initial charge, approximately 4m long and ideally made of ash wood. These would often shatter on impact with the enemy, and as the mêlée slowed, lances would be dropped and weapons such as swords or maces drawn instead. Sword design was not subject to meteoric change in this period. Most were generally straight, double-edged weapons, broadswords which were very similar to those used by the Vikings hundreds of years earlier. They weighed about 3lbs or a little less, and were well suited for the slashing or hacking actions of a cavalry mêlée.[23]

The lance typified the style of fighting for which the knightly class were best known. They also trained with a variety of other weapons, however, and the skills of the hunt were often transferable to military activity. Knights, competitive in all things, could also have a reputation for archery as well as the more traditional jousting skills that we usually associate with them. On the Third Crusade, for instance, we are told that 'the Norman William du Bois, who was a very skilled archer, untiringly fired arrows and darts, this way and that, routing . . . [the enemy]'.[24]

Similarly, while on campaign in the north against Nur al-Din in 1150, one of the most senior crusader knights, Humphrey of Toron, the constable of Jerusalem, had a bow to hand, with which he and presumably some of his men chased off a unit of Turkic light cavalry. According to William of Tyre, 'Humphrey, the constable, armed with his bow, was pursuing the retreating infidels a little apart from the army when a soldier from the enemy's ranks approached him'.[25] Humphrey, who had linguistic as well as archery skills, could speak Turkic. He engaged in some banter with the enemy cavalryman and the encounter ended peacefully. Clearly even some of the more senior Frankish knights were capable of operating as mounted archers and, given that they were living in a part of the world where mounted archery was a central part of enemy military practice, it is perhaps not surprising that this should be so. It is also interesting that William of Tyre mentions this purely in passing, as an anecdote that speaks well

of Humphrey's bravery and skills but with no obvious expectation that his readers would find the idea of a Turkic-speaking horse archer Frankish lord outlandish or entirely unexpected.[26]

Archery skills would also have been useful on garrison duty, one of the less glamorous but entirely typical roles which a knight would have been called on to fulfil. Evidence is slight but there is an interesting detail in the summary of court-martial proceedings taken against a Templar brother knight. He was found guilty of 'losing' two weapons that he had been entrusted with, while travelling from the castle of Blanchegarde down to Kerak, to the east of the Dead Sea. The suspicion must have been that he had sold the weapons, and he was eventually expelled from the order. It is interesting to see, however, that although one of his weapons was a sword (predictably enough), the other was a longbow.[27] It seems likely that many knights, with little else to occupy them for lengthy periods of time, would have wanted to be able to pick up a longbow or crossbow in the event of a siege, helping the rest of the garrison to keep enemy miners and engineers at bay for as long as possible.

The most important piece of equipment used by a knight, however, as well as the most vulnerable, was his horse. Training was important, both on an individual level and as military units. On a personal basis, it started very young and it was thought to be vital that good riding skills were already in place before puberty. Ongoing training was important, for the horse as much as the rider, and the knightly pursuit of the hunt as a form of relaxation was a very practical way of ensuring that riding skills were continually honed by both.[28]

The knight's horse was a stallion, but smaller than one might imagine, perhaps no more than 15 hands high (i.e. some 5ft high at the shoulder). Horse armour later became more prevalent but during the twelfth century almost all Frankish horses were unarmoured and the vulnerability of their horses dictated much of the battle tactics of the period. For a nomadic light cavalryman, kept at a distance by the threat of Frankish infantry archers or crossbowmen, it was hard to kill or wound a Frankish knight. Only a very lucky shot could bring him down and, while under fire oneself, this was never an attractive option. The knight's horse was a different matter, however. This was a much bigger target and much less well protected. Without his horse, the Frankish knight was transformed into a slow-moving and easily tired heavy infantryman, almost entirely incapable of offensive action against light cavalry. An altogether easier prospect.

So, while the strength of a Frankish knight was well known to their opponents, whether Byzantine Christians, Turkic warlords or Egyptian viziers, their vulnerability was also widely recognised: an obvious tactic was to try to wound or kill as many of their horses as possible,

before they could even form up to launch one of their renowned charges. Anna Comnena, writing of a confrontation between Bohemond and her father's troops, shows the explicit emphasis the Byzantines placed on aiming at mounts rather than riders. Her father ensured that the Byzantine cavalry:

> were issued with a plentiful supply of arrows and told not to hold back in their use; but they were to shoot at the horses rather than the [Franks] . . . Shooting the riders, therefore, would in his opinion be pointless and quite crazy . . . the emperor, who had plenty of experience of [Frankish] armour and our arrows, ordered them not to worry about the men but rather to attack the horses.[29]

If the Byzantines were aware of the need to focus on the crusaders' horses, the Turkic light cavalry that formed the backbone of most of the Muslim armies operating in Syria in this period were even better motivated to do so. They had large numbers of archers and the capacity to lay down dense showers of arrows. Although their arrows did not have the penetrative power to inflict grievous casualties on the Frankish heavy troops, whether infantry or knights, the horses were extremely vulnerable. A Muslim source, Abu Shama, analysed the situation in a way which was uncannily similar to Anna Comnena's. Writing about the battle of Hattin, he commented that a 'Frankish knight, as long as his horse was in good condition, could not be knocked down. Covered with mail from head to foot, which made him look like a block of iron, the most violent blows make no impression on him. But once his horse was killed, the knight was thrown and taken prisoner. Consequently, though we counted them [i.e. the Frankish prisoners taken at Hattin] by the thousand, there were no horses amongst the spoils, whereas the knights were unhurt.' It is significant that although there were huge numbers of horses in the Frankish army (perhaps some 10,000 animals), none had emerged unscathed from the arrow storms unleashed by the Muslim archers.[30]

Archery was a great leveller. In a matter of seconds, a couple of cheap arrows, fired by a poorly armed man on a pony, could turn the Frankish knight, the most expensive piece of military kit on the battlefield, into a slow-moving and disorientated infantryman. The knights, and their unstoppable charge, were at the core of how a crusader army needed to perform. Until the moment was right, however, a delicate balancing act was always required to simultaneously protect the horses and stop the enemy overrunning the flanks and rear.

Squires

There was a large number of squires in the army, certainly more than

the number of knights, as each had one or more squires to assist him. The exact role and status of the squires, variously known as ‘armigeri’ or ‘ecuyers’, seemed to vary according to individual circumstances. And the term ‘squire’ covered a range of different social positions. Some, for instance, were trainee knights and therefore of high social status, while others were servants, acting as grooms, cooks and so on. This inevitably affected the military roles they were given on campaign.

The trainee knights would have had a programme of weapon training and were gradually given tasks which more actively supported their masters in battle. The grooms, on the other hand, were more likely to get the less glamorous but nonetheless essential tasks, such as foraging and mucking out the stables. Some of the duties ascribed to the squires were so humble that many commentators have been led to believe that they played no role in battlefield fighting. No doubt some, particularly the younger boys, were indeed non-combatants, or were left to guard the baggage train. But the majority could perform as lightly armed cavalry and the evidence is overwhelming that they did fight when required, albeit in roles that reflected their lighter equipment and more junior status. Given the perennial need for manpower, no one was left standing around.

Large numbers of squires were sometimes grouped together when the army went on campaign, and sent out as foraging parties. This was clearly not high-status work, but it was far more suited to these lightly armed horsemen than to heavier troops. The act of foraging required a relatively high degree of dispersal, however, and there was always a danger that foraging parties would be surprised by enemy cavalry patrols. For this reason, it was generally best practice for an escort of more heavily armed soldiers to be assigned to them. These guards would be better prepared for close combat and their main duty was to be on the watch for enemy troops, rather than focusing on finding supplies.

During the Third Crusade, for instance, we are told that ‘the esquires went out from the army foraging for fodder. The noble lords of the Temple were guarding them at that time. The foragers, who left the army, spread out across the land looking for good grass.’[31] A few months later another Frankish foraging party, again consisting largely of squires, was badly cut up in a Muslim ambush: ‘Not long after, our squires and servants went out to look for fodder for the pack animals and unwarily went too far. Saracens leapt out from ambush, killed some of them and led others away prisoner, along with a great many horses.’[32] Incidents such as these, suggesting that the squires needed armed protection to be provided by other men, have been interpreted

as meaning that the squires themselves were not armed. In fact, of course, all it really suggests is that they were vulnerable to attack because they were lightly armed, moving through enemy territory and, due to the nature of the task, operating in a highly dispersed formation.

It is certainly true that squires were not generally expected to fight in the front rank of the charge: that dangerous privilege was given to the knights. Even then, however, when circumstances were sufficiently desperate, exceptions could be made. In 1101, for instance, there were so few knights that attempts were made to upgrade some of the older and better trained squires ('armigeri') socially and, as far as possible, in terms of weapons and equipment. Baldwin I, faced with a lack of knights and another imminent Egyptian invasion, brought the squires into the front ranks of the army: 'Because it was urgent that we should have knights, the king ordered each one who could to make a knight of his squire ['quicumque potuit de armigero suo militem fecit']. In this way our knights numbered about two hundred and sixty and our footmen about nine hundred.'[33] As so often with the armies of the crusader states, there was a theoretical delineation of roles, but practice on the day depended on how desperate the situation was.

In the military orders at least, the squires were expected to play an active role in combat. When battle seemed imminent, they were formed into a squadron of their own, under the command of the standard bearer. Section 179 of *The Rule of the Templars* tells us that 'when the brothers go in squadrons, a turcopole should carry the banner, and the Standard Bearer should form the squires into a squadron'.[34] The squadron of squires was then divided into two different groups, presumably determined by their status, age and military experience. Those leading warhorses ('destriers') would hand them over to their brother knight and then, riding their own mount, they would fall in behind the brother knights and form part of the back ranks of the charge. As the *Rule* said, 'if the Marshal and the brothers charge, the squires who lead the destriers should charge behind their lords'.[35]

The other squires, the less able remnant, were instructed to retire with the mules from which the brother knights had dismounted, and regroup around the standard bearer. As the charge was launched, the standard bearer had to decide how best to deploy this far from elite force, some of whom were presumably mounted only on mules or other baggage animals. Even this relatively motley crew were expected to be deployed as actively as possible, however, plugging gaps and perhaps gathering prisoners or despatching enemy wounded. The *Rule* said that at this point the standard bearer 'should have a

banner furled round his lance; and when the Marshal charges he should have the squires formed into squadrons and should unfurl his banner; and he should go after those who are attacking as best, as soon and in as orderly a fashion as he can, at a walk or amble, or what ever seems best to him'.[36] The standard bearer was clearly left with the least effective troops, and the tone of the Templars' military manual is one of 'just do the best you can'. But even the most junior squires were expected to fight if circumstances required it.

Acting in such close support of the knights was often undertaken at the cost of their own lives. During a running fight with Turkic troops on 17 June 1192, we find mounted squires in the thick of the fighting. A Frankish supply train had set out from Jaffa to try to get to the main army, then camped at Bait Nuba, about 12 miles from Jerusalem. The column was ambushed, however, and in the fighting the Frankish cavalry guarding the wagon train, both knights and squires, ended up in a confused mêlée with the Turkic troopers. Baldwin Carron, one of the commanders of the escort, was later heavily criticised because he and the column were felt to have 'wandered along incautiously'. Baldwin lost his horse early on in the fighting and another horse was found for him. Later, this second horse was also killed under him. He decided to pull rank and 'he ordered one of his squires to get off the horse he was riding and give it to him. The squire had displayed great prowess while he was mounted on horseback, but as soon as Baldwin mounted he saw his squire's head cut off.' The context makes clear that the squires were playing an active role in the fighting, as lighter cavalry acting in support of the knights.[37]

Their relative lack of armour also meant that they were better suited than the knights for certain other tasks. At the siege of Acre in 1191, a group of squires even came together to form an elite unit who were tasked with the assault on one of the key towers. As the assault parties formed up 'our squires [armigeri] took up their arms. They were greedy for glory and victory and fit and ready for battle . . . At around the third hour [i.e. 9.00 am] . . . the men of valour and the outstanding squires set out to attack the aforesaid tower. They boldly climbed up it immediately. When the Turks saw them they began to shout, and the whole city was aroused!' The squires were eventually repulsed, but it was only the weight of enemy numbers and naphtha hand grenades that forced them off the battlements.[38]

The squires did not have the necessary training or equipment to allow them to serve in the front rank. Some of the younger boys were probably too physically underdeveloped to allow them to do so, even if they had been fully equipped. But in a highly militarised society with a permanently undermanned army, they were expected to do their part on the battlefield in support of their lords.

Mounted Sergeants

If the knights were the fine tip of the army, the mounted sergeants were, in theory at least, the solid backbone of heavy cavalry that rode in behind them. Together with the squires and the Turcopoles, they provided the numbers required to exploit a successful charge, and turn a breakthrough into a rout.

We find sergeants in a wide variety of roles, and the term 'sergeant' denoted a basic social status that inevitably encompassed a large group of men with widely differing skills and levels of professionalism. As ever in the Latin East, the temptation is to read too much into relatively limited evidence and to use hindsight to impose rules and firm boundaries that may never have existed. Men did whatever was required on the day, subject to the limitations of their skills and equipment.

In parallel with the records of knights' service owed to the king of Jerusalem, however, we also have some hard data points about the service owed by sergeants.[39] As we have seen, John of Ibelin's list of military obligations recorded the situation which existed in the 1180s, just before the collapse in the aftermath of the battle of Hattin. Section 15 of the list sets out what 'the churches and the burgesses [i.e. the townsfolk] owe when there is a great need in the land of the kingdom of Jerusalem'.[40] It is not entirely clear how 'great need' was defined, but what the towns and ecclesiastical institutions 'owe' is expressed entirely in terms of the numbers of sergeants they could supply. The total number of sergeants they were obliged to maintain, in theory at least, was just in excess of 5,000 men.[41]

The scale of the obligation was substantial and could only have been offered on a temporary and emergency basis. The contributions seem to have been determined partly by how much land each institution owned (and hence their access to feudal vassals) and partly by their commercial wealth (and hence their ability to recruit mercenaries or train and equip a local militia to an acceptable standard).

At the top end of the scale we find the major ecclesiastical and secular institutions. The patriarch of Jerusalem and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre each owed the service of 500 men, as did the cities of Acre and Tyre. The city of Nablus had to provide 300 sergeants, while the bishop of Bethlehem and the town of Tiberias provided 200 men each. Other institutions were expected to provide proportionately fewer, according to their capabilities.[42]

The kinds of men represented by these figures would be similarly diverse, encompassing major differences in quality and capability. At one end of the spectrum would be professional soldiers, perhaps mercenaries attracted from the west or drawn from other parts of the

Middle East. Some would be Armenian veterans with years of experience. Others might be yeoman farmers from the various settlements, or prosperous burgesses from the towns, well motivated and independent but not necessarily highly skilled at arms. Or, at the other end of the scale, some might be taken from the urban poor, pulled together at the last moment to make up numbers and meet legal obligations.

We know from slightly later evidence that the Christian towns of the crusader states operated confraternities (brotherhoods) that performed military functions and which could provide a natural semi-trained urban militia in time of need. The leading ecclesiastical institutions also had their own lay confratres to call on, together with their settlers and feudal vassals, alongside any core mercenary contingents they may have employed to protect their estates.[43]

It is unclear whether these men were expected to serve as cavalry or infantry. There was certainly a continual need for additional cavalry to support the kingdom's cadre of knights: this would argue that pressure was applied to ensure as many sergeants as possible were mounted. Equally, given the fast-moving Muslim armies that they would be responding to, and the need to gather at specified muster points, sometimes at the opposite end of the kingdom, there would be a need for the sergeants to move as quickly as possible even if they were insufficiently skilled to operate as cavalry on the battlefield. It is likely that some of them were equipped as impromptu 'mounted infantry', perhaps using nags or mules to move more quickly towards muster points.

On the other hand, it is not entirely plausible to envisage that these large numbers of cavalry existed in the towns and ecclesiastical estates, and yet could only be called upon in emergencies. It is hard to believe that such a force was available on tap, well equipped and with adequate horses, and yet was not part of the kingdom's normal fighting capabilities.[44]

Examples of what the kingdom's muster of sergeants would look like in practice are extremely rare. The men called up are generally subsumed by chroniclers into the army as a whole. As we have seen in the case of Magna Mahomeria, a colonial settlement of the Holy Sepulchre, no fewer than sixty-five of the younger Franks from the settlement joined the royal muster in 1170 and were almost wiped out when Saladin's men temporarily overran their position in the suburbs of Gaza. As they are described as lightly armed youths and arrived late at the muster point, it seems that they were an inexperienced infantry unit, the scrapings of the local rural militia, called up as part of the 'arrière-ban'. Being the younger, more lightly armed of the local Frankish troops, they are also probably not representative of the

muster as a whole. It is entirely possible that the better-armed elements of the contingent from Magna Mahomeria were mounted, and were already with the Frankish field army: the only reason the youths were trapped in Gaza was because they were on foot and arrived too late.[45]

Some sergeants were certainly mounted. The mounted arm generally had a higher status than the infantry, and would have had a greater chance of survival in the event of a major defeat. Horses also made it easier to move on campaign and quicker to get to appointed muster points. Prosperous burgesses with access to horses would have been unlikely to want to operate as infantry from choice.

But regardless of how many of the sergeants on John of Ibelin's lists were equipped as cavalry, we know that mounted sergeants were an important element in the Frankish army from the earliest days. Indeed, given the perennial shortage of knights and the appalling mortality rates suffered by the knightly class in the first two decades of the twelfth century, that would inevitably be the case.[46] The knights were always the centre of attention, the prestigious 'miles' or armoured knights ('miles loricatus'). But we also hear of other cavalry, less glamorous and often mentioned only as an accidental aside, the more 'lightly armoured cavalry' (the 'equites levis armaturae') or, just to reaffirm their social as well as military inferiority, the 'second-class cavalry' ('equites classes secundae').[47]

In 1102, for instance, King Baldwin I tried to rebuild an army in the aftermath of his disastrous defeat at Ramla, and sent a native Christian messenger to Jerusalem to mobilise what few reinforcements might be available. Fulcher of Chartres, who was with Baldwin at the time, wrote that 'they immediately got ready as many knights as they could find in Jerusalem. There were ninety as I recall, knights as well as those who were able to obtain horses and set out without delay.'[48] Some of the able-bodied men among the Frankish settlers in Jerusalem were clearly able to operate as cavalry alongside the knights at short notice.

Similarly, in writing of events following another Egyptian invasion just three years later, Fulcher makes it clear that the knights were only part of the Frankish mounted arm, though other sources often airbrush these non-noble cavalrymen out of the narrative. At the muster of the Christian army, for instance, Fulcher wrote that the 'knights numbered about five hundred, excepting those who were not counted as knights although they are mounted'.[49] Interestingly, William of Tyre, using Fulcher as his only source and writing of exactly the same events, bows to social conventions and turns this sentence into something subtly different: 'our forces were numbered and found to consist of five hundred knights'.[50] Similarly, in a description of the German

army of the Second Crusade, we are told that 'there were in the army of the emperor alone about seventy thousand mailed knights ('loricatorum'), besides the people on foot, women and children, and light armed cavalry ('equitibus levis armaturae')'. Socially inferior cavalry were at least mentioned, albeit only after the 'women and children'.[51]

The military orders naturally became large-scale employers of mounted sergeants as the twelfth century progressed, either as 'brother sergeants' or as paid troops to support the knights. There were also volunteers from Europe who served as mounted sergeants with the Templars or Hospitallers for a set period of time, as an act of piety in observance of vows.[52] Sergeants feature heavily in *The Rule of the Templars* and it is clear from context that many of these were serving as mounted soldiers. With the brothers often undertaking long-distance patrols or raids into enemy territory, the emphasis on mounted support troops or auxiliaries is not surprising. The implication that sergeants, and perhaps squires, would have been given lighter weaponry and equipment to act as mounted support for the brother knights is supported by references to the discretion that local Templar commanders had to buy 'Turkish arms' (presumably bows and other items of lighter equipment) to give to the brother sergeants.[53]

The Templars' manual shows how the mounted sergeants were equipped and deployed and, although the military orders were more formally structured than other units, there is no reason to think that this was anything other than the articulation of normal best practice across the army as a whole. Templar sergeants were required to wear cheaper and lighter armour than the brother knights and this too was probably a reflection of more general practice. By the standards of most contemporary armies, however, the sergeants still had extremely impressive defensive equipment. They would have worn a padded leather tunic or jerkin, and over that a hauberk, like the knights' but sleeveless, to perhaps help in using weapons such as crossbows. They also had mail leggings but again somewhat lighter than the knights': theirs had no foot coverings, making it easier for them to operate as infantry if necessary. The preferred helmet, at least for a Templar sergeant, was the more open kettle-helmet (a 'chapeau de fer') which traded off less protection for the face against better visibility: particularly helpful in firing missile weapons such as bows or crossbows. They were mounted but had less elaborate horse equipment than the brother knights, and, unlike the knights, only a few very senior sergeants were allowed to have more than one horse.[54]

There were different grades of sergeant brothers, but the

distinctions between them are not entirely clear. A few of the senior sergeant brothers, commanders of the houses, were of sufficient wealth and status to have their own squires.[55] Some were more heavily armoured than others, and they were expected to be fighting towards the front of the line with the Templar knights. There were also less heavily armoured mounted sergeant brothers, but even they seem to have been expected to participate in the charge, albeit in the back ranks, as we find that they were given permission to go to the back if wounded (i.e. an explicit recognition that their normal position was towards the front): 'The sergeant brothers who are armed in mail should conduct themselves under arms as is given for the knight brothers; and the other sergeant brothers who are not armed [i.e. those without mail armour], if they act well, will receive thanks from God and the brothers. And if they see that they cannot resist or that they are wounded, they may go to the back, if they wish, without permission.'[56]

The mounted sergeants, along with the squires, were an important element in the follow-up phase of any Frankish cavalry charge. Often invisible and always overshadowed by their social superiors, the sergeants and squires could provide the critical mass to turn the initial impact of a charge into an irreversible breakthrough.

Turcopoles

Outnumbered, surrounded and often operating in unfavourable terrain, the cumbersome crusader armies should have been wiped out soon after they had arrived. The extraordinary success of the Frankish military in the Middle East during much of the twelfth century is almost inexplicable without an appreciation of the role of the Turcopoles. Their availability as a group of native auxiliaries has always been seen as one of the more exotic components of crusading warfare. But it has also generally been the case that their numbers have been grossly underestimated and the value of their contribution underplayed.[57]

By the time the armies of the First Crusade reached Asia Minor, Turcopoles were already a well-established part of the Byzantine army. Their origins are relatively obscure, but the name itself means 'son of a Turk', so there is clearly a combined meaning derived from both ethnic background and military function: the troops were notable for their Turkic ethnicity, at least in part, with the implication that they operated in the Turkic fashion as light cavalry archers. The Byzantines had access to 'Tourkopoulai' recruits because they had been employing nomadic mercenaries, Seljuk Turks or Turcomans, from the late eleventh century onwards. The Christianised offspring of these mercenaries, perhaps supplemented by further recruits filtering

down from the steppes in search of employment, meant that these units could continue to be employed into the twelfth century. In the Byzantine army at least, with its light cavalry contingents from many different ethnic origins, the use of the term 'Turcopole' was clearly synonymous with a light cavalry archer from a specific ethnic background.[58]

The Franks adapted quickly to the imperatives of warfare in the Middle East and were soon aware that they needed such troops. They copied the Byzantines by adopting the term 'Turcopole' for the light cavalry archers that they started to recruit. In the northern crusader states of Antioch and Edessa there were more opportunities to recruit individuals or small groups of nomads. It is probably no coincidence that the main occasions in which we see Turcopoles operating on the battlefield in a high-profile and semi-independent role were when they were operating within the Antiochene field army.

Unlike the Byzantines, however, the Franks, and particularly those in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and the County of Tripoli, had no consistent or reliable source of Turkic ethnic manpower upon which to call. Over time therefore, and very quickly in the case of the southern crusader states, the term 'Turcopole' lost its ethnic specificity. That is not to suggest that there were no individuals of Turkic origin amongst the Frankish light cavalry. On the contrary, any suitable Turkic recruits would have been extremely welcome. But there were not many of them to choose from.

Although Turcopoles are often assumed to be of Turkic mixed race in terms of their ethnic origins, the only surviving references to mixed-race Turcopoles relate to those employed in the Byzantine army, generally recruited and deployed in the northern lands of Asia Minor. There is no specific evidence of any Frankish Turcopoles having been of mixed race. Even if there were some, there were never enough to supply the very substantial numbers of light cavalry that we find the Franks employing.

The Franks certainly used the word 'Turcopole' as a label but, given the far more restricted access they had to men of genuinely Turkic origin, they tended to use the term far more loosely and in a less strictly technical sense than the Byzantines. In most cases it merely meant 'Christian horse archer, usually operating as light cavalry'. In practice, it seems that the Franks recruited for this troop type from among anybody who was suitable, regardless of origin. The local Christian communities were demilitarised when they were under Muslim control, and although this was somewhat reversed under Frankish rule, they did not have an extensive heritage as mounted archers. Similarly, the Franks themselves had no such tradition though, as we have seen, there are individual examples of mounted

archers and crossbowmen. One is left with the impression that local Christians, and perhaps Frankish settlers or mercenaries from Europe, would be recruited to serve as Turcopoles. As the years passed, the calibre and skills of the Turcopoles seem to have improved, and they began to take a more prominent role in the military affairs of the crusader states. As purely mounted archers, however, operating on a semi-independent basis, they were generally outnumbered and outclassed by genuine Turkic cavalry.[59]

The relative looseness of the Frankish definition is reflected in the fact that Turcopoles and mounted sergeants (the 'sergens a cheval') were sometimes jointly described as 'equites levis armaturae', that is, lightly armed cavalry. It is possible that in some instances the terms 'Turcopole' and 'mounted sergeant' were used interchangeably, suggesting a greater degree of interest in a more primary distinction between the heavily armoured cavalry (the knights) and those who were less heavily armoured. Some documents from crusader Cyprus certainly seem to use the terms interchangeably, as if their readers would understand that there was sometimes little or no difference between the two. It seems likely that at least some contemporary writers saw 'Turcopoles' as a sub-set of the category of the less heavily armed cavalry known as mounted sergeants or 'sergens a cheval'.[60]

The Turcopoles also seemed to have gradually gained a higher status than some modern references to them as 'native auxiliaries' might imply. *The Rule of the Templars* certainly suggests that the professionalism of a good Turcopole had a high value placed upon it. The role of their commander in the order, the Turcopolier, was a very high-status one, and the rations given to Turcopoles were generous, implying that in at least some cases they were of a higher status than sergeants.[61]

But the most important thing about the Turcopoles, far more important than their ethnic origins or the descriptive labels attached to them, is their sheer volume. There were a lot of them in Frankish armies. They are often invisible in the chronicles, but when we do come across them, generally as an accidental aside, it is clear that they formed a very large part of the Frankish mounted arm, and sometimes even the majority.[62]

A cavalry detachment from Tripoli in 1109, for example, commanded by the count himself, became lost and was intercepted by the 'askar of Shaizar. We are told by Usama that even at this early stage, fully 40 per cent of the Frankish troops were Turcopoles: 'my father and my two uncles departed at the head of a body of troops to confront that lost detachment, and who should it be but the Cerdagnais [i.e. William-Jordan II], the lord of Tripoli, at the head of three hundred horsemen and two hundred Turcopoles (these are

archers for the Franks)'.[63]

Similarly, in an account of a Frankish cavalry force in Egypt in 1167, fully two-thirds of the men are described as Turcopoles. A legal document survives which set out an agreement made only a few months later, in October 1168, between the Hospitallers and Amalric, king of Jerusalem, detailing the assistance which the order promised to give for the forthcoming invasion of Egypt. In it the Hospitallers committed themselves to provide no fewer than 500 Turcopoles, alongside 500 knights (i.e. with the Turcopoles constituting 50 per cent of their cavalry contingent). Likewise, the Frankish army which was fielded against Saladin's forces in 1183 had a cavalry contingent of whom 50 per cent were Turcopoles and they also appear to have constituted a large part (perhaps even the majority) of the Frankish mounted arm at Hattin four years later.[64]

The way in which Turcopoles were used changed significantly over time. There seems to have been some early experimentation in terms of how to use them most effectively on the battlefield. As we have seen, the northern Franks had access to larger numbers of militarised local Christians and to Turkic mercenaries (Christian or otherwise), and in the first two decades of the twelfth century seem to have deployed them as a separate arm. The Principality of Antioch also had most contact with the Byzantine army, and may initially have tried to emulate their example by giving the Turcopoles a more prominent and independent role.

The experiment entailed using the Turcopoles as semi-independent units which could be deployed at the forefront of the Frankish battle line, protecting the flanks of the knights to ensure that their assault could take place with minimal disruption. This sounds very reasonable in theory but in practice it was an absolute disaster. At the battle of Tell Danith in 1115 the Turcopoles were deployed as a separate unit on the far left of the Frankish army in an attempt to allow the knights to deliver their charge without interference. In the event, however, the Turcopoles broke when confronted by the Turkic cavalry and fled into the advancing Antiochene troops, disrupting their charge rather than helping it.[65]

Four years later, at Ager Sanguinis, the Franks, still overly optimistic, tried again, presumably having made efforts to strengthen their Turcopole units in the meantime. The results were remarkably similar. The Turcopoles were stationed on the left to try to protect the flank of Robert of St Lo's division as they charged the enemy lines. As at Tell Danith, however, the Turcopoles were overwhelmed by their opponents and routed. To make matters worse, rather than just failing to protect the flank, they fled back into the nearest body of Frankish troops, disrupted the charge they were tasked to support and carried

away friendly troops with them as they ran.[66]

The battle was a disaster. The Franks were so heavily outnumbered that they had little chance of success, but the poor performance of the Turcopoles certainly contributed to their failure. It is probably no coincidence that this is the last time we see them deployed in an independent battlefield role. As we have seen, the Turcopoles were a numerically important part of the Frankish mounted arm, far more so than has been generally appreciated. The Franks did not have the luxury of not using them on the battlefield. But they needed to find a role in which they could perform more effectively.

The debate about the role of the Turcopoles has tended to focus on 'what did they do?', with the implicit criticism being that one rarely sees them in a charge after 1119. In fact, probably a better question is 'what didn't they do?' Apart from not appearing in the front rank of the knightly charges, the answer seems to be that they did pretty much everything.

The best way to use Turcopoles was eventually felt to be to split their main contribution into two: first, on the battlefield, to deploy them in the charge, but in the rear ranks, rather than to give them an independent role and, second, on campaign, to give them the full range of tactical and operational tasks normally associated with light cavalry.

Knights were expensive and were always in short supply. The Franks in the Holy Land were faced with the issue of how to deal with large groups of Turkic horse archers, not just in pitched battles, but also (and far more frequently) in raids and skirmishes. Turcopole recruits were an obvious way of making up for the lack of knightly numbers. Their lighter equipment and ability to operate in a more fluid and flexible manner also helped them to fulfil tasks that were less well suited to heavier cavalry.

The Turcopoles were thus employed as the 'workhorse' of the Frankish armies, and the flexibility they provided allowed the slower crusader armies to operate and survive in an environment where the majority of their enemies had a far greater degree of manoeuvrability. We tend to focus on the knights, but it is easy to forget that the majority of troops in most Frankish armies were the even more ponderous infantry.

Turcopoles helped to create the necessary operational flexibility and manoeuvrability that a heavy Frankish army would otherwise have lacked. They undertook long-range reconnaissance and spying missions. They scouted in front of the enemy on campaign and shadowed any forces on the move. They harassed Muslim supply lines and isolated columns. In short, while they could not entirely 'solve' the issue of how to deal with large numbers of Turkic light cavalry on

the battlefield, they could act as a bridge between European and eastern modes of fighting, giving sufficient flexibility to a Frankish army to allow it to either deter enemy cavalry armies, or to arrive on the battlefield in a condition that would maximise their chances of success.

The issue of how best to protect the flanks of charging knights still remained, however. This was partly addressed by charging in echelon; by improving the timing and discipline of the charge (and hence reducing the elapsed time between launch and impact); and by operating for as long as possible under the protection of Frankish infantry archers and crossbowmen. It was also partly solved by putting large numbers of Turcopoles and mounted sergeants in successive ranks behind the charging knights, offering the knights at least some protection from flanks and rear.

There were tactical, social and administrative differences between mounted sergeants and Turcopoles, but there were large areas of overlap between them in terms of functionality, particularly on the battlefield. In Templar contingents both groups of soldiers were placed under the command of the office of the Turcopolier as battle approached because, at the critical moment of the charge, they were all expected to support the brother knights, and would form the rear ranks in the attack.[67]

The Turcopoles had a particular role in terms of reconnaissance and scouting, however, and also seem to have become more closely associated with the military orders as the twelfth century progressed.[68] We know that the Templar Turcopoles would often go out on scouting missions ahead of the main body of knights, but also had small groups of knights attached to them in case the fighting intensified.[69]

This longer-range scouting could also mean that Turcopoles might operate independently, between the main armies, in small groups. In July 1182 Saladin invaded the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, and his brother launched a diversionary attack from Egypt in support. William of Tyre wrote that a Christian courier 'came from the south with trustworthy information that Saladin's brother with an immense force had invaded our land in the vicinity of [Darum]. Thirty-six of the light armed knights ['levis armaturae milites'] who are called Turcopoles had been slain and some of the outlying villages burned.'[70] This seems to imply that the Turcopoles were operating as a separate unit at this point, as there were no casualties mentioned among other troops. We know that the Templars operated a series of garrisons and outposts along the southern border of the kingdom and, together with the Hospitallers, deployed large numbers of Turcopoles. What we see here was perhaps a Templar border patrol that was overwhelmed by Turkic

cavalry during the incursion.

A good example of how the Turcopoles operated on a day-to-day basis is given in the surviving details of a somewhat later Templar court-martial, when brother knights were (rather harshly) being disciplined for having charged without orders. The Templar Turcopolier officer and his Turcopole scouts were part of a small force which had left Jaffa and triggered an ambush by Turkic cavalry operating in the environs of Fontaine Barbie. The Turcopolier and his men were accompanied by ten Templar knights and a commander, the regulation covering force detailed to accompany them.[71]

The Muslim force seems to have let the crusader vanguard pass through, but before they could spring their trap they were spotted by the Templar knights moving up from the rear of the column. Rather than wait to be attacked, four of the Templar knights charged their ambushers, followed shortly afterwards by the other six. The Turcopolier and his men then turned around and joined in the fighting, and the ambushers were routed. The Templar knights were subsequently disciplined for engaging the enemy without permission but their defence, which seems to have been a strong one, was that they were justified in doing so because of the danger posed to the Turcopolier and his men. As always, the knights take centre stage in the telling of this incident, but it is interesting to see evidence of Turcopoles scouting at the head of a column, and engaging successfully with the enemy once contact had been made.[72]

In an ironic reversal of traditional roles, Turcopoles were also at the forefront of the only detailed example we have of Christian horse archers harassing a Muslim convoy. In June 1192, King Richard received news of a rich Muslim caravan at the ‘Round Cistern’, south of Bethgibelin. He had with him a cavalry force of some 1,500 men, of whom about 1,000 were Turcopoles, together with an unspecified number of infantry. Richard sent the Turcopoles and light infantry forward to delay the Muslim column with their archery while he readied his heavier troops and tried to catch up.[73] The Turcopoles seem to have been successful, despite the presence in the column of large numbers of elite Turkic cavalry which Saladin had sent to reinforce the column.[74]

It is often forgotten that the majority of casualties tend to be inflicted once an army has been broken, rather than in the initial impact. The charge is the glamorous, high-profile event, but the task of fully destroying an enemy force takes place when opponents are on the run, when weapons and armour have been discarded, and when cohesive battle formations have broken down into small knots of fugitives. It was here that the Turcopoles could come into their own, chasing down the fleeing enemy, despatching the wounded or

disorientated, and taking prisoners.

The Turcopoles were never able to fully neutralise the Turkic threat: the nomadic cavalry were far too good an opponent for that. But they were able to help in a lot of other tactical and operational roles which greatly improved the flexibility and manoeuvrability of Frankish armies.

Infantry

Back in the west, infantry of this period tended to be poorly armoured and equipped. They were treated as social and military inferiors by the mounted elite. Most were taken from the servants of the knights and the retinues, and occasionally from the city militias. Even the better equipped would only have had a padded or quilted jacket as their main body protection, and a very basic iron cap as a helmet. Their weapons might have been a spear, or possibly a bow. Only the better armed men would have had swords.[75]

There were exceptions, of course. The growth of the middle classes in certain parts of Europe was accompanied by a shift in the balance of social and military power, and an increase in the role played by infantry. In the developing urban communities of what are now Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands, for instance, foot soldiers had greater prominence, and infantry naturally had a role to play in siege warfare. Similarly, mercenaries could be hired for specific campaigns, to increase numbers, skills and flexibility, but they were always a luxury item in a largely non-monetary economy and the piecemeal nature of their recruitment militated against their use as cohesive units. Crossbowmen were still seen as expensive specialists, rarely employed in sufficient numbers to make a battle-winning difference.[76]

But infantry in Europe generally had the lower-status roles. Their weapons remained broadly the same. Their armour remained rudimentary. And the amateurish way that they were recruited and deployed meant that medieval infantry remained a low-priority adjunct to those higher up the social hierarchy. Perhaps most importantly, there is little evidence that they were able to perform cohesively as units. Their ability to manoeuvre was even more limited than that of the knightly cavalry.

In the crusader states, however, their role gradually assumed greater prominence. The inconvenient truth of warfare in the east was that any European-style army without large numbers of missile-armed infantry, archers or crossbowmen was a sitting target for enemy light cavalry archers. There were always areas where the deployment of infantry was difficult. Large parts of the frontier lands of eastern Galilee, or the Oultrejourdain, for instance, were characterised by open spaces with few defensible positions or other terrain suitable for

infantry to make a stand. Unprotected infantry, particularly when at the end of an inevitably rudimentary supply line, were vulnerable to armies with a high proportion of light horse. But the need for crusader armies to include significant numbers of effective infantry was recognised at an early stage, as were the penalties for failing to do so.

The learning curve for forces arriving from Europe was steep and extremely painful. The armies of the Second Crusade, for instance, had brought infantry with them who were neither well armed nor skilled, and the lack of archers was to prove a particular problem. Many of the devout but poorer volunteer infantry in the German army were just a liability. The knights and their cavalry retinues were relatively well prepared but, as Odo of Deuil wrote, it would have been better if they 'had instructed the infantry ['pedites'] in the same way and, keeping the weak at home, had equipped all the strong with the sword instead of the wallet and the bow instead of the staff; for the weak and helpless are always a burden to their comrades and a source of prey to their enemies'. Even lightly equipped pilgrims could make a useful contribution if they were armed with bows but beyond this the pious poor were merely another set of mouths to feed.[77]

As so often, demand helped drive progress. The need for good infantry meant that they had a higher status than their counterparts back in Europe. Difficulties in encouraging new settlers meant that the lower orders of the Frankish population were always in a far stronger negotiating position than their peers in the west. Conditions had to be attractive enough to persuade large numbers of people to come, and to stay. To offset the dangers of their new lives, more freedoms were part of the inevitable trade-off. Recruits from the rural settlements tended to be tenant farmers rather than serfs. The militia from the towns and cities were likely to be burgesses, home-owning tradesmen. And the capture of the coastal cities enabled a resurgence of commerce that generated money to sustain cadres of standing 'semi-professional' infantry and to hire in mercenaries. Under these circumstances, the infantry of the Latin East were increasingly likely to be more effective and better motivated than their European equivalents.

The process of producing upgraded infantry had begun at an early stage. The infantry survivors of the First Crusade were true veterans. The nature of the march, with its inevitable battles and hardships, meant that the survivors were the most experienced and hardened of their peers, equipped with the best armour and weapons available from those who had fallen around them.[78]

The increasing professionalism of the crusading infantry was reflected in the quality and sophistication of their defensive armour. Towards the end of the century we find examples where infantrymen were still fighting and manoeuvring in formation despite having many

arrows sticking out of their armour and, as chroniclers always enjoyed pointing out, looking more like hedgehogs than men.

A detailed description of the kind of equipment a well-armed infantryman might be wearing survives from the siege of Acre in 1190, and shows just how effective it could be, even in the most difficult of circumstances. A Frankish infantryman:

> was in the ditch outside the city walls. He wandered back and forth, searching for weak spots in the walls, and firing the crossbow which he was carrying in his hand at the enemy. His armour was quite adequate for an infantryman: his head was protected by an iron covering; he also had a mailshirt and a tunic made of quilted linen, popularly called a 'doublet'. Its skilful cross-seaming makes it difficult for a weapon to pierce it. While he was standing, looking up, suddenly a Turk fired a crossbow bolt at him with great force from the top of the wall and struck him in the chest, piercing all the armour, i.e. the iron headpiece, and the mail shirt and doublet.[79]

And yet the bolt did not kill or even seriously wound him. Contemporaries attributed this lucky escape to a holy amulet which he was carrying, and, who knows, it may have helped. But it is clear that the different layers of armour so reduced the penetrative impact of the force that it was possible to survive even a crossbow bolt fired at relatively close range.

Muslim commentators were also impressed by the level of protection enjoyed by the Frankish heavy infantry. Baha' al-Din describes the way in which Saladin sent his troops to harass Frankish infantry marching in column, only to find that their armour made them extremely hard to stop:

> He sent the skirmishers forward and the arrows on both sides were like rain. The enemy army was already in formation with the infantry surrounding it like a wall, wearing solid iron corslets and full length well-made chain-mail, so that arrows were falling on them with no effect. They were shooting with crossbows and wounding the Muslims' horses, their cavalry and infantry. I saw various individuals among the Franks with ten arrows fixed in their backs, pressing on in this fashion quite unconcerned.[80]

The crossbow was one of the key weapons of the Frankish army. Although the social status of the lance ensured that it got much more attention in the chronicles, the crossbow was arguably just as important. As we shall see, the relationship between crossbow and lance encapsulated the interdependency of infantry and cavalry in the army.

The crossbow had many of the positive characteristics of an early musket and many of the same drawbacks too. Like the musket, it was more effective than a simple bow, with a good range and excellent penetrative power. Most importantly, unlike a bow, it was easy to operate and required far less training. To be a good archer took years,

but an adequate crossbowman could be fielded in a matter of days. It was the ideal weapon for, say, an urban militia or the more prosperous yeoman farmers called up as part of the arrière-ban. There were improvements in crossbow design over the course of the twelfth century, with the heavier and simpler wooden bows being gradually superseded by lighter and more expensive composite horn bows. The more sophisticated newer models would be more likely to be used by professional mercenaries or the military orders. But the simpler versions would be found over a longer period of time among the poorer or less professional elements of the army, and were still capable of good service.[81]

The drawbacks were also similar to those of the early musket. 'Spanning' the crossbow, the process of pulling the bow string back, locking it in place and getting a bolt ready for firing, took far longer than the time an expert archer would need to load and fire an arrow. Slow loading times meant that they needed to be deployed en masse, so that at least some of the crossbows would be ready to fire at any given time.

They also needed the protection of spearmen, to deter enemy cavalry from coming to close quarters. Correctly used, however, this was an extremely effective combination. The tactical crossbow 'teams' that we hear of on the Third Crusade (two crossbowmen alternately loading and firing behind spearmen providing close protection) are not mentioned as being a tactical innovation, so they had presumably been in use, perhaps less formally, for many years before. The availability of ready-loaded crossbows, combined with the protection offered by spearman with their shields, makes it feasible that the Frankish crossbowmen, or the more professional ones at least, were able to use volley fire to keep Muslim horse archers at bay.

There was always a clear recognition that the effectiveness of infantry was largely dependent on the way they interacted with the cavalry, however. The knights needed infantry support but the reverse was also true. From the earliest days of the Latin kingdom commentators were aware that the Frankish army operated best as a 'combined arms' force, and that disaster was more likely to strike if either arm was left to fight on its own.

In May 1102 at the battle of Ramla, for instance, King Baldwin I of Jerusalem was widely criticised for his impetuosity in pressing on into battle without waiting for his infantry to join him: 'It was indeed very rash for the king to neglect to wait for his men and to proceed into battle in disorderly fashion because he should have known better. Without foot-soldiers and hardly waiting for his knights, he hurried to meet the enemy until at length he foolishly threw himself into a multitude of Arabs.'[82]

Conversely, infantry could be severely cut up by enemy cavalry when isolated, even for relatively short periods of time. As Fulcher of Chartres commented about the battle of Jaffa in 1102, the infantry needed support just as much as the knights did: 'When our [knights] by vigorous fighting penetrated the hostile ranks in one place, it was immediately necessary to come back somewhere else. This was because our enemies, when they saw our footmen without the protection of knights, would rush at once to that place and slay those in the rear'.[83]

As we shall see when looking at the 'fighting march' in more detail, the Frankish infantry were capable of performing disciplined manoeuvres in the face of the enemy, even when closely engaged. Fresh units were able to relieve tired ones, and take their place in the battle line. Baha' al-Din noted that during an attack on a Frankish column some 'of their infantry rested while marching beside the sea, not being engaged in the fight. When those engaged in the battle became tired or were debilitated by wounds, the company that had been resting would take their place and the previously active company would take a rest.'[84]

The *Itinerarium Peregrinorum*, commenting on a march in September 1191, made clear how vital, and how professional, the infantry could be. They:

> struggled with great resolve and contended with untiring valour, turning to face the Turkish assault which threatened them from behind. So they walked backwards as if they were retreating because otherwise they could not protect their backs adequately. In fact, because of the Turkish threat from behind they advanced with their faces turned towards them all that day, travelling back-to-front, fighting every step of the way.[85]

The noble author, in a statement that would have been unthinkable in contemporary Europe, summarised their performance: 'How essential those valiant crossbowmen and archers were that day!'[86]

The professionalism of the Frankish infantry should not be overstated. The quality of the infantry available to crusader armies was inevitably variable and every force would encompass men with widely differing abilities and skills. Unlike western Europe, however, the key difference in the crusader states was the urgency of the need. Infantry in the east had to become better equipped, better deployed and far better integrated into military practice because no Frankish army could survive without them. Desperation, as ever, turbo-charged military evolution and trumped the conservatism of social conventions.

Mercenaries

Mercenaries were an increasingly important part of Frankish armies, particularly in the second half of the twelfth century as the momentum of 'total war' increased, and the succession of campaigns into Egypt were followed by the Ayyubid counter-offensives of the 1170s and 1180s.[87]

The word 'mercenary' has rather pejorative connotations to a modern ear but in the context of the time it was far more neutral and pragmatic. These were often merely men, local or otherwise, fighting for pay and subsistence rather than because of feudal obligations. As with modern soldiers, needing to earn a salary while on campaign was not necessarily at odds with motivations of piety or patriotism. The Italian city states, for example, fought in the east for very sound commercial reasons, but the desire to make money could also be accompanied by genuine religious sentiment, and a sincere wish to help defend the Holy Land.[88]

The range of men classed as 'mercenaries' also covers a wide spectrum. Some might be highly professional soldiers from western Europe who had made the trip east looking for steady work. These might have specialist skills, for instance with crossbows or with particular aspects of siege warfare. At the other end of the spectrum might be relatively poor urban workers, armed with a spear: not a full-time professional perhaps but someone who was available for pay when replacements were needed.

The most ambitious mercenaries came from the very highest ranks of society, and these tended to cause most social friction. Such newcomers were a valuable source of talent, but the fact that they were ultimately looking for fiefs rather than just a salary meant that they provoked much jealousy among their peers. They were generally treated as 'parvenus' by the local nobility, furious at the extra competition for the best available heiresses. Reynald of Châtillon came east in search of an heiress and struck it rich, becoming prince of Antioch by marrying Princess Constance, and later becoming lord of the strategically vital Transjordan. He must have had extraordinary charisma and personal qualities, but despite this even the normally even-handed William of Tyre could not help describing him disdainfully as a mere 'mercenary knight' ['stipendarius miles'].[89]

Gerard of Ridefort, who eventually became master of the Templars, was similarly much reviled by his contemporaries, who enjoyed reminding anyone who would listen that his origins were as a mercenary. They also liked to suggest that the only reason he turned to the celibacy of the Templars was because he had been left at the altar by the Tripolitan heiress he had hoped to marry. The bitterness of rejection and the sexual frustration of celibacy, they implied, were at the root of this 'parvenu's' reckless behaviour on the battlefield.[90]

The existence of mercenary knights and other heavy cavalry was apparent from the first days of the crusader states. Referring to the situation in the kingdom of Jerusalem in August 1113, William of Tyre commented that King Baldwin 'was poor and needy, so that his means barely sufficed for his daily needs and the payment of his knights ['equitum stipendia']'.[91]

At the siege of Tyre in 1124, when military resources were stretched to the limit by the length and difficulties of the blockade, substantial numbers of mercenaries were involved, and this was doubtless repeated in many other major campaigns as the century progressed. Fulcher of Chartres wrote that 'because a lack of money at that time hindered us all, a large sum was collected man by man to pay knights and hired footmen ['militiae et clientelae']. Such a project as the proposed siege [of Tyre] could not be completed without payments to the men.'[92] Later in the siege, when a Damascene relief army arrived, the 'entire cavalry forces and the mercenary infantry ['equites omnes et stipendiarii pedites'] were to issue forth from the camp under command of the count of Tripoli and William [of Bures], the king's constable and administrator of the realm'.[93] It is interesting to see that the mercenary infantry were felt to be the best quality foot available, and most suited to manoeuvre in the field. The other, less manoeuvrable, infantry were left behind with the more static role of guarding the siege engines and preventing sorties by the garrison of Tyre.

Ironically, the successful siege of Tyre, itself only made possible by the use of mercenaries, was a turning point. From 1124 onwards, all of the Palestinian and Syrian coastal cities north of Ascalon were back in Christian hands. Trade routes to Europe could be opened up more freely, exploiting the rich opportunities offered by access to the western end of the Silk Roads. On the back of such trade, a monetary economy could flourish again. And with money flowing between Europe and the eastern Mediterranean, the crusader states could establish themselves as the destination of choice for mercenaries looking for steady employment.[94]

Large parts of the defence of the crusader states were given over to mercenary units. In 1132 we find Renier Brus, the lord of the key frontier castle of Banyas, present with the king and the feudal army of the Latin Kingdom at Jaffa, trying to settle a relatively rare dispute between the nobility before it could degenerate into civil war. Renier seems to have taken all his feudal troops with him when he went to the king, but his castles still needed to be guarded. William of Tyre, in discussing the capture of Banyas by the Damascene forces in December of that year, makes it clear that the entire Frankish garrison were mercenaries: 'The citizens were taken prisoners, and all the

mercenary soldiers in the city, both knights and foot soldiers [‘qui in ea erant stipendiariis utriusque, tam equitum quam peditum’], were seized.’[95]

As the ‘arms race’ with the new Ayyubid super-state hotted up later in the twelfth century, mercenaries were in increasing demand. The principle of taxation, arrived at by the General Council of the Latin Kingdom in 1183, had a primary purpose of allowing greater numbers of mercenaries to be hired. William of Tyre, who was present at the assembly, wrote that ‘it was resolved by common consent that a census of all the lands of the realm be taken. If such a report were available, it would be possible in an emergency to obtain foot and cavalry forces [‘equitum peditumque copias’] so that the enemy, if he returned, would find us prepared for resistance.’[96] By medieval standards, this was an extraordinary step. With the feudal contingents operating at maximum capacity, and with colonial settlement already highly intensive, the only course of action left was to try to squeeze the economy to provide access to more troops. The entire direction of the economy was geared towards its ability to support large mercenary contingents, non-feudal paid soldiers. This was now a society on a permanent war footing.

The Frankish Army in the Field

A rarity. When this did occur, the way a Frankish army operated in the face of the enemy was extremely distinctive.

Our initial reaction is to assume that the two main drivers of Frankish military practice, the disciplined knightly charge and the gradual development of well-equipped heavy infantry, were typical of European warfare, and that this was the mode of warfare that the crusaders brought with them. In fact, the opposite was true. Warfare in the east was a crucible of innovation for European warfare, leading developments, not typifying or reflecting them. These major shifts were not made in response to changing European politics or the introduction of new and more sophisticated armour. Rather, they were the necessary response to unarmoured men on small ponies. The effectiveness of nomadic horse archers, and the 'arms race' they sparked in the Middle East, inadvertently speeded up the process of professionalising European warfare. It was also the main catalyst in shaping military best practice in the crusader armies of the period.[1]

The three Frankish tactical developments which came to typify crusading warfare were a direct consequence of the need to solve the problems posed by nomadic light cavalry. The charge had to become more disciplined and better focused. A 'fighting march' was essential to ensure that the flanks and rear were protected. And an 'infantry shieldwall' was needed, combining missile weapons to keep enemy cavalry at a distance, with spears to deter them from close contact.

The Charge

Taking the charge first, it is important to remember that they, like battles, were rare. Even when they did take place, they were often over in a matter of minutes. Yet it was these few minutes that could decide the outcome of a campaign or the fate of an entire kingdom.

Charges were not typical, but they could be defining. The knights were the elite warriors of their societies, and it was in the charge that they had to justify their status: in the heat of battle, often against overwhelming odds, and in the full view of their peers and vassals.

On the face of it, the knightly charge is not one of the innovations or tactical developments that would immediately spring to mind as having emanated from the crusades. On the contrary, if the fluid harassment of light horse archers typifies Turkic battle techniques, one would intuitively suggest that the western equivalent, the 'signature dish' of European and crusader armies, was surely the knightly charge.

This is true, but only up to a point. The concept of the western heavy cavalry charge was subtly different in Outremer and these differences had a profound impact not just in the Holy Land but eventually back in Europe as well. Frankish charges in the east were better than their European equivalents. They were far more than just the transfer of best practice from the west. This was not a coincidence. They were better because they needed to be.

For a charge to be successful against a more mobile opponent, it needed to find an opportunity to connect. Unlike their counterparts on European battlefields, where the enemy army presented a large and relatively slow-moving mass, getting into contact and finding the 'fixed point' of an enemy in the east was far more difficult. Charges had to be more effective, better disciplined and timed to perfection if they were to have a chance of connecting with Turkic cavalry.

The heavy cavalry charge was certainly the battle technique for which the Franks were best known. Anna Comnena, who insisted on referring to the Franks as 'Celts', was occasionally overcome by her own classical education and the need to impress. She overemphasised the crusaders' impetuous charges, disingenuously suggesting that they were somehow analogous to the (largely infantry) Celtic battle lines that faced Julius Caesar. This certainly worked from a narrative perspective, presenting the Franks as the highly emotional barbarians of the piece, with her father taking on the role of civilised emperor.

It was also a gross misrepresentation of how a Frankish army operated, however, and probably deliberately so. Even Anna was forced to admit that their charges could be highly effective. She famously wrote that 'a mounted Frank is irresistible, able to bore his way through the walls of Babylon'.[2] The Frankish knights were 'irresistible, evident not only in the rank and file, but in their leaders too, charging into the midst of the enemy's line with overwhelming abandon'.[3]

The shock of a Frankish charge also featured prominently in the minds of their Muslim opponents and was often referred to as their

most traditional tactic, their 'famous charge'. In 1127, for instance, Frankish forces were raiding in the Hauran, the fertile lands south of Damascus, and were caught up in running fights with Turkic cavalry. The Muslim forces became overconfident, and ventured too close to the Franks. As the Christian knights rallied 'they turned to face the Muslim cavalry and charged upon them with their famous onset, broke them and drove them in flight, killing all those of the rearmost'.[4]

Similarly, at the siege of Damascus in 1148, the Frankish cavalry were 'ever delaying to make their famous onslaught until the opportunity should be offered them'.[5] A few months later at the battle of Inab in June 1149, the heavily outnumbered Christians tried the same technique again, but mistimed the attack, allowing the enemy cavalry to evade and outflank them. They made 'their famous charge upon the Muslims, but the Muslims split up into detachments which attacked them from various directions and swarmed over them'.[6]

The lance was the primary offensive weapon of the knight in a charge, particularly for the initial impact. It was about 4m in length, generally with a leaf-shaped tip. Crosspieces were sometimes added at the base of the lance head to stop it over-penetrating, thereby increasing the likelihood of being able to use it again in the same fight. As well as over-penetration, however, lances often shattered on contact, or were discarded if the enemy did not break and a closer mêlée ensued. Even if bodies of knights could withdraw and regroup, the subsequent charges never had the same impact.[7] Anna Comnena was careful to make the distinction between the first charge and any subsequent attacks. 'Generally speaking', she wrote, the Franks 'are indomitable in the opening cavalry charge'.[8]

Ironically, given the knights' reputation for arrogance and individualism and Anna's comments about their impetuosity, the true effectiveness of a Frankish charge lay in its restraint. A group of individuals charging wildly at an enemy unit could be countered as individuals. A tightly disciplined Frankish charge was elemental in its impact, however. If pushed through with resolution, it could break the enemy on the spot. Once the momentum of the charge was lost, however, or if unit cohesion lessened, the fighting would become more general. The Frankish knights were highly trained in individual fighting skills, but in a mêlée numbers inevitably tell, and the Christian armies rarely had numbers on their side.

Two examples, both from 1119, show the importance of cohesion and discipline in the charge, and how their absence could lead to disaster. As we have seen, at the battle of Ager Sanguinis, in June of that year, Turcopoles on the left of the Christian line fled into the Frankish knights just as they were in the process of launching their

initial charge into the Muslim lines. The charge was fatally disrupted and the Turcopoles carried parts of the Christian left flank away with them in rout. The entire Frankish army was destroyed in the aftermath of the failure.[9] Ager Sanguinis saw a well-coordinated charge by a Frankish army that failed partly because it was disrupted at a critical moment.

By contrast, contemporary western armies often faced difficulties in maintaining cohesion, even without facing nomadic archers or the excuse of such disruption. At the battle of Brémule, which took place in Normandy just a few weeks later, the French knights of King Louis VI were able to launch the first charge against their English opponents but failed to exploit the opportunity this offered. As Orderic Vitalis wrote, 'the French launched the first fierce attack but, charging in disorder, they were beaten off and, quickly tiring, turned tail'.[10] The problem was not that the French attack had ended in disorder. That was to be expected. The real issue was that it had started in disorder. There was only one optimal charge on the battlefield, and that was the first one.[11]

Poor cohesion in western armies could often be traced back to a lack of training. When most feudal forces gathered, they were unused to working together as units. Charging in formation, with couched lances, is not an easy or natural manoeuvre for either men or horses. It requires a great deal of training, both individually and as a group. Unit cohesion was the key to delivering the maximum impact at the right time.

The crusader states faced many military problems, but in this regard they had certain advantages. In the Latin East, with its huge military commitments and chronic levels of threat, the men inevitably became well used to mustering together and campaigning both as units and as an army. Indeed, some of the larger feudal contingents, particularly those with frontiers to contest, were used to operating together on an almost day-to-day basis. In western Europe, the dispersed nature of feudalism meant that many knights spent the majority of the year on their estates and the opportunities for training at unit or 'divisional' level were very limited. The secular knights in the Latin East were also prone to this dispersal, but to a much lesser extent. They were more consistently militarised than their European peers and the high levels of campaigning in the Holy Land meant that they were more accustomed to operating and manoeuvring together as part of an army.

As always, the small details of a society say a lot. In western Europe, tournaments, either in single combat or as more general mêlées, were an increasingly important part of the social life of the elite, providing vital opportunities to practise warfare in a (relatively)

safe training environment. But we never find tournaments in the crusader states. They had no need of fake warfare when they had so much of the real thing, and no need of artificial training exercises when they were on campaign so regularly. The knights of Outremer fought together more often, for longer periods of time and for a greater span of their lives than any comparable group in Europe. And, in addition to major campaigns, unit cohesion was also helped by their all too frequent exposure to the raids and skirmishes that rarely made it into the chronicles of the period.[12]

The growth of the military orders in the course of the twelfth century also meant that there was a core of semi-professional knights, bound together by vows of obedience and well-practised in charging as a disciplined unit.[13] They were highly structured in the way they organised themselves for the charge. The surviving regulations of the Templars give us a sense of what they would have looked like. The Templar charge was, in theory at least, strictly controlled. The master of the Templars, for instance, would have overall command if he were on the battlefield, but otherwise control would devolve to the marshal, the most senior military officer of the order. He gave the order to charge and no one was allowed to move towards the enemy without his command. He was surrounded by ten hand-picked brother knights who were instructed to stay close by him, with the order's banner. On either side of them, the rest of the knights were arranged into squadrons, each squadron commanded by a leader with a gonfannon (banner) and ten knights to act as his bodyguard.

Once the Templar knights had been formed into squadrons ('eschielles') and battle seemed imminent, even higher levels of discipline were imposed. *The Rule of the Templars* insisted that, when 'they are established in squadrons, no brother should go from one squadron to another, nor mount his horse nor take up his shield or lance without permission; and when they are armed and they go in a squadron, they should place their squires with lances in front of them, and those with horses behind them'.[14] Until the final command to charge was given, no brother was to leave the ranks, either to move towards the enemy or to go to another squadron without explicit permission. And as the charge became imminent, the Turcopoles and the brother sergeants would be drawn up in close formation in rear ranks, under the command of the Turcopolier, ready to support the knights and help carry the impetus of the charge forward.[15]

A pilgrim account, written at some point in the two decades before the battle of Hattin, was full of admiration for the way the Templars were able to deploy themselves in battle: 'Their bicoloured standard which is called the "baucant" [i.e. piebald] goes before them into battle. They go into battle in order and without making a noise, they

are first to desire engagement and more vigorous than others; they are the first to go and the last to return, and they wait for their Master's command before acting.' The interest this excited from a European visitor shows that this level of discipline, far from being typical, was highly unusual in the west.[16]

The rest of the army would seek to emulate this as best they could and learned much from their example. The king's marshal would form the knights into squadrons, and there were precedents established, based on rank and experience in the field, to make this process easier and quicker. Larger feudal contingents such as those, say, from the royal domain, the Principality of Galilee or the Oultrejourdain, might be formed together into one or more squadrons in their own right. Other, smaller fiefs might be grouped together to form composite squadrons. The positioning of units in the field also depended on where the battle was taking place. The contingents of local lords expected, and were generally given, positions of greater responsibility and honour. Behind them, the mounted sergeants, squires and Turcopoles would be formed into the rear supporting ranks of the charge. Depending on the size of the army, the squadrons might then be formed into larger divisions, each under the command of an eminent Frankish leader.

The first onslaught was certainly the most effective and the temptation is to think of a Frankish knightly charge as being a single, not to be repeated, opportunity. Yet it is clear that this was not necessarily the case. Lances were fragile, and horses were vulnerable to archery, but the knights themselves were always formidable: they were experts with the weapons they used, and they were extremely well protected. An initial charge could rout the enemy but even if it did not, with lances shattered and horses blown, the knights were still dangerous. They were, moreover, sometimes capable of regrouping and reforming for a second or even a third charge. The support of the successive ranks of squires and mounted sergeants, together with their spare mounts, would undoubtedly have helped knights to extricate themselves from a stalled mêlée and to move back behind the infantry shieldwall, where they could rearm and remount.

Robert of Vieux-Pont, for example, led his men in a series of charges against the Turkic troops besieging al-Atharib in 1119. Walter the Chancellor's vivid description gives us a sense of what the fighting looked like and how it felt to be involved in repeated charges. We are told that Robert:

> charged many of them as they rode in troops and struck them, and at once, after he had broken his lance on one of them he drew his sword and struck many others of them again, and only when he himself had been struck in return by many, and his horse pierced by many different weapons, did he fall

> . . . But . . . although he was brought down to the ground by the constant blows of lances and arrows, yet he rose up and mustered his forces . . . At once they . . . brought him a second horse, which he mounted . . . Soon after . . . they charged the enemy together a second time. But the enemy had launched a similar attack on Robert first, and he hit the ground protected by his shield.[17]

As always, the squires and infantry are almost invisible but it is clear from the context of this description that not only were successive charges feasible, but that they were made possible by the knights' social inferiors providing protection while regrouping took place and bringing up fresh horses for a new attack.

Launching an effective charge under the conditions faced by Frankish armies in the east was never easy. It needed good leadership at both unit and army level. The charge was a brutal, primal force, but at the same time a strangely delicate operation. Mistakes that would have been inconsequential when facing the cumbersome and less cohesive armies of western Europe were severely punished in the east. The crusader armies were better at the charge than their European counterparts for the simple fact that they had to be.

The Fighting March

The 'fighting march', together with the knightly charge, is the formation most closely associated with the crusader armies. At its most basic, the formation was an elongated rectangular 'box', with the narrow end of the formation facing the direction of march. It generally consisted of three divisions: van, centre and rear. In the centre division, and in the middle of the box, would be the baggage train, the wounded and non-combatants, the highly visible main army standards and religious artefacts. The outer layers of the box would consist of mixed infantry units, combining archers or crossbowmen with spearmen. Sheltering behind this outer layer, for the protection of the horses more than their riders, would be the cavalry, held in reserve (and hopefully relative safety) until the moment came to launch a charge.[18]

To suggest that the Franks perfected the 'fighting march' formation, either in terms of inventing it, or of having become profoundly good at it, is an exaggeration, however. In many ways, once confronted with the tactical problems posed by an enemy who consisted mainly of nomadic horse archers, the idea of the fighting march formation was largely common sense.

Interdependency and protected flanks, having comrades you could rely on to help when you needed them most, were at the heart of the successful fighting march. Most obviously, and most importantly, the 'solid wall' of infantry on the outer sides of the formation was able to

keep the Muslim horsemen at bay. The spearmen were able to discourage them from coming to close quarters, while the crossbowmen and archers were able to force the enemy archers either to keep their distance, or to absorb casualties.

They were helped by the fact that light cavalry bows tended to have a lesser range than, say, crossbows or infantry longbows, and the penetrative power of their arrows tailed off significantly at longer ranges: hence the fact that Frankish troops were often able to be struck by many arrows without being seriously wounded or incapacitated. Many of the Muslim cavalry, particularly those outside the more regular ‘askar, were largely motivated by booty. The horses they rode were probably their most valuable possessions. An unbroken Frankish infantry shieldwall offered precious little opportunity for plunder, but held every prospect of being able to wound or kill them or their precious mounts. A close assault, or even medium-distance skirmishing, must have been a very unattractive prospect for such men over any extended period of time.

From a Frankish perspective the key lay in the preservation of healthy horseflesh. The knights themselves were very well protected, but their horses were always extremely vulnerable to archery. The fighting march allowed the horses to move slowly within the relative safety of an outer shield of heavy infantry. Similarly, the infantry on their own would always find it difficult to break a cavalry-dominated Muslim army, so their self-interest also lay in the preservation of a powerful cavalry force.

But the interdependency did not stop there. Each of the three main divisions of a Frankish army on a ‘fighting march’ could rely on its comrades for support, as long as formations were kept tight and the units were not allowed to move too far away from each other. The most vulnerable division from this perspective, and the one which was most difficult to handle, was generally the rearguard. The enemy would naturally tend to focus on it, and try to force delay as it struggled to keep enemy horse archers at bay. The vanguard might well be oblivious to this, and the natural tendency would be for it to keep moving forward, opening gaps in the formation. The centre division, better placed to see the pressure the rearguard was under, and the extent to which its pace was slowing, would find it difficult to keep aligned between the two other divisions, and to keep dangerous gaps from appearing. For this reason, the military orders were often given command of the rear, as this was the most highly threatened command, and was one to which their (hopefully) more disciplined knights were better suited. The central division on the march was the location for the Frankish field commander to base himself, as better visibility and interior lines helped him to balance the needs of the van

and rear divisions.

The Byzantines claimed to have invented the fighting march and had certainly experimented with it over the years. Anna Comnena wrote that her father, the emperor Alexius, first used the formation for his campaign to rescue Christian civilians in Asia Minor in 1116, but had been working on the theory of how it could be put into practice long before that. This was perhaps unsurprising, given that his forces were facing the same problems as the crusaders, posed by the same nomadic light cavalry.

Alexius put a training programme in place for his troops to allow them to manoeuvre in the new formation and to try to establish principles of unit cohesion on the parade ground before trying it out in the field. He even gathered his troops together to practise at Dorylaeum, as the 'plain was clearly large enough for manoeuvres and as he wished to review the whole army and discover its real potential, he set up camp there. This was an excellent opportunity to try out effectively the battle formation he was again considering and which he had often described on paper when making his plans'. The new formation was explicitly designed to counter the Turkic light cavalry tactics they expected to encounter.[19]

As a devoted daughter, and as a highly politicised observer, Anna was extremely partisan, and her views need to be treated with caution. Never one to let an opportunity for praise go by, and using embarrassingly fulsome language, Anna wrote that her father was so impressed with the result that he claimed divine intervention as its inspiration: 'After careful examination to test the impregnability of this formation, he was surprised at its power: it must be, he thought, directly attributable to God – a battle order inspired by angels.' The emperor, 'calculating that it could never be broken, was full of good hopes and prayed to God that they might be fulfilled'.[20]

Alexius' campaign of 1116 went well enough but, whether the battle order was angelic or not, the campaign's objectives were extremely limited. The fighting march formation, carried out over terrain that was often challenging, was difficult to maintain, even by professional Byzantine troops. The capacity for rapid manoeuvre was almost entirely lost and even Anna Comnena, while eulogising her father's achievements, recorded that 'the return journey was made slowly, in a leisurely way and at an ant's pace, so to speak, with the captives, women and children, and all the booty in the centre of the column'. However professional the troops, the 'fighting march' was essentially defensive in nature.[21]

The fighting march was even more difficult for feudal western armies to master, as they struggled east on crusade, trying (the hard way) to learn the techniques of how to fight nomadic cavalry. But

poor decision-making and a fragmented command structure was not confined to newcomers to the region. Even experienced troops, who should have known better, needed to work hard to conduct a fighting march. Weak leadership and complacency was also in evidence when, in 1164, a large army including Byzantine, Frankish and Armenian forces, marched to relieve the town of Harim, then under siege by Nur al-Din. At first, discipline was tight. The Christian army 'marched with forces drawn up in battle formation ['in aciem dispositis'], determined to relieve the siege'.[22]

Once Nur al-Din had withdrawn and the immediate danger seemed to have passed, discipline loosened. Overconfidence set in and was reflected in a lack of focus and an associated breakdown of unit cohesion. As the army pursued the retreating Muslim forces, formations became dangerously mixed up as 'regardless of the rules of military discipline ['contra disciplinam militarem'], they recklessly dispersed . . . in pursuit of the foe'.[23] Nur al-Din was delighted. His troops surrounded the Christian army in rough terrain, and the allied heavy cavalry became separated from their infantry. The ranks were overrun and most of the Christian commanders captured (10 August 1164). The siege of Harim was resumed and it fell shortly thereafter.[24]

If cohesion and discipline could be maintained, however, the 'fighting march' could be conducted very successfully, even under the most difficult of circumstances. A good example of this took place in 1150, when it was finally recognised that the remnants of the County of Edessa were untenable. The king of Jerusalem, Baldwin III, and his forces had the difficult task of trying to help evacuate civilians to Antioch in safety, in the face of opposition from Turkic cavalry. As with Alexius' formation in 1116, the main purpose behind the expedition was to safeguard civilians with large amounts of baggage and animals. The fighting march, with its 'box-like' qualities, was the most appropriate way to protect the vulnerable non-combatants, while at the same time maintaining the cohesiveness of the army. This was an entire community on the move.[25]

The challenge was not just how to protect these people, but how to keep them moving in the face of severe enemy pressure. As William of Tyre wrote, the king had with him 'all the people who desired to leave, together with their pack animals and a great amount of baggage, for each man proposed to take with him his entire household and domestic staff as well as all his furniture. So with this great crowd of unwarlike people and an enormous amount of baggage, the king hastened to depart, that he might lead them to a place of safety.' 'Hastened' was, in this context, probably an over-statement, but at least they were on the move.[26]

The Christian army moved slowly out, and made camp after a

march of only five or six miles.[27] Muslim troops had gathered and were beginning to harass the column. The march resumed the next day, however, and William of Tyre gives a good account of how Nur al-Din's troops tried to pressurise the Franks into making a mistake, and how the discipline of the column allowed it to continue to push its way through.

As enemy pressure intensified, so the Christian lines were tightened, and roles were allocated to individual commanders to ensure close coordination. When the Frankish leaders:

> saw that great array in marching order, they rearranged their own battalions with the five hundred knights whom they had with them and assigned regular places to all. The king was to march ahead with the vanguard and direct the advance of the crowds on foot. The count of Tripoli and the royal constable, Humphrey [of Toron], were assigned to protect the rear divisions. With the largest and strongest forces they were to sustain the attacks of the foe and defend the people from their violence. The nobles of Antioch were placed on the left and the right of the column, that a strong force of brave men and armed knights might encircle the multitude who had been placed in the centre.[28]

Nur al-Din kept up the pressure for the rest of the day. Whenever possible, he sent troops to engage in close combat with the weaker parts of the formation, trying to break the cohesion of the march or to provoke a charge by the Frankish knights:

> Throughout that entire day, until sunset, the Christians advanced in this order. Without intermission, they were harried by intolerable evils, repeated attacks, and skirmishes at close quarters. Showers of arrows rained upon the advancing troops until all the baggage bristled with darts like a porcupine. Dust and heat, always prevalent in August, exhausted the people beyond endurance and, in addition, severe thirst assailed them. Finally, just as the sun was sinking to rest, the Turks, who had no food supplies with them and who had, moreover, lost some of their nobles, gave the signal for retreat.[29]

Eventually Nur al-Din gave up. The flanks and rear of the column were under close guard, and his troops were demotivated by the absence of easy pickings and their own lack of supplies.

The discipline of the Frankish army had been impressive. As far as we know, this was a largely feudal host. The military orders, which one normally associates with tight discipline, do not seem to have been present in large numbers. The army was drawn from all four of the crusader states: this was probably the last time that an Edessan contingent could be fielded, and their knights were presumably subsumed into the other Frankish forces from this point onwards. So, not only was this a feudal force, but it was also a composite army.

Despite this, however, they were able to maintain a difficult formation, encumbered by large numbers of non-combatants and their

baggage. Baldwin and Humphrey of Toron were both good and experienced commanders, but it also speaks well of the discipline which secular knights and feudal contingents could bring to the battlefield if well led. The continuously high level of military activity in Outremer placed an enormous physical and emotional toll on individuals, but it also helped to create a core of veterans who were battle hardened and able to operate well together under pressure.

The conduct of the Edessan evacuation shows that the local Franks had developed expertise in conducting a fighting march. In the face of large numbers of Turkic light cavalry, it had quickly become established best practice in the east. But the principles were clear, and the best of the European commanders arriving on crusade soon picked them up too. In fact, it was Richard the Lionheart, commanding mixed forces of local Franks and western troops in 1191–2, who eventually gave the masterclass in how to conduct a fighting march while outnumbered and under severe enemy provocation.

The formation put a huge onus of responsibility on the army commander and his subordinates. King Richard knew this well and was permanently vigilant, ready to respond quickly. On the day of the battle of Arsuf (7 September 1191) he was continually on the move, inspiring the troops by his presence, ensuring that spaces did not open up between the divisions, and micro-managing deployment. He took a small cavalry reserve with him, in case of emergency, to plug the gaps caused by difficult terrain or enemy attacks. As the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum* put it: 'King Richard and the duke of Burgundy rode this way and that with a chosen company of knights, keeping a constant look out on all sides, to the right and to the left, carefully weighing up the Turks' position and behaviour so that they could advise the advancing army as they saw necessary. Their precautions were certainly absolutely essential.'[30]

Even relatively minor mishaps, such as a narrowing of the track, or a broken wagon axle, could create a cause for concern. And if those concerns were not addressed immediately they could quickly spiral out of control. On 25 August 1191, as Richard's army marched down towards Arsuf, weather conditions reduced visibility, with potentially disastrous results as 'a fog had risen that would bring trouble to the army. The column thinned out, attenuating where the carters who were transporting the food went. The Saracens rushed down, singling out the carters, killed men and horses.'[31]

Richard was able to bring the situation under control by swift action, returning with his mobile reserve of elite knights to the part of the column where the enemy had broken through, but damage had been done, even in that short time: 'the whole army was in chaos, but King Richard knew nothing about it. The rearguard was brought to a

standstill, afraid and in disarray. Then came riding up John FitzLucas, and told the king at once. The king returned straight away, and with him his trusty companions, coming back from the vanguard and galloping against the Turks.'[32] Guy of Lusignan, a passive and uninspiring leader, enjoying poor relations with his fractious sub-commanders, was never suited to command an army in such a demanding formation. He showed himself to be incapable of clear decision-making on the march to Tiberias in 1187 and, as we shall see, the disaster at Hattin was the consequence.

Anything that could help improve command and control on the fighting march was extremely important. The True Cross and other religious icons and standards were often placed in the centre division of a march and fulfilled a valuable role in raising morale. Just as importantly, however, they also served as a rallying point and an indicator of the column's progress. Because they were deliberately raised to as great a height as possible, they helped show the vanguard and rearguard divisions where the centre point of the army was and, in the absence of any other commands, acted as an indicator of speed and direction.[33]

At Arsuf we are told that the Normans:

> guarded the Standard . . . It is a very long beam, like a ship's mast placed on very solid planks on top of four wheels, held together by joints. It is covered with iron and appears invulnerable to sword, axe or fire. From the very top flutters the king's flag, which is commonly called the 'banner' . . . It is the custom to assign a force of elite knights to protect this implement, especially in the field of battle . . . because if it happened to be knocked down by some accident then the army would be thrown into confusion and scattered because there would not be any rallying point.[34]

The role of the iconic wagon as a focal point is clear. The *Itinerarium Peregrinorum* says that:

> while the emblem remains erect the people have a sure refuge to which they can run; the infirm and wounded are brought here to be cared for and even those who happen to be killed in battle are brought here if they were renowned or illustrious men . . . It is sensible to have it placed on wheels because it can be drawn forward as the enemy falls back, or drawn back as they attack, according to the state of the battle.[35]

Both sides knew their roles well. The crusaders kept their formations as tight as possible, while the Muslim cavalry focused on the rear of the Frankish column and their more vulnerable horses. The Turkic forces 'attacked so strongly that they had almost destroyed the Hospitallers' lines [i.e. in the rear division]. They informed King Richard they could not hold back the enemy's violent attack any longer unless the knights made a charge against them. [The reply came back:] "But the king advises against this, and instructs them to

be patient." . . .'[36] The Hospitallers were placed under even more pressure as the enemy sensed weakness, and the fighting moved to hand-to-hand combat in places: 'No longer did [the Muslim cavalry] employ arrows and darts from a distance; drawing even closer, they stabbed them with lances, crushed them with heavy clubs and assailed them with swords hand-to-hand . . . The battle was heaviest in the Hospitallers' final line, the more so because they were not permitted to fight back.'[37]

The Turkic tactics were as much about provocation and disruption as about causing casualties. The knights were not complaining about the casualties they were taking. These seem to have been relatively light, given the excellent armour they were wearing. But there were two other considerations, each of which was perhaps just as important. From a cultural perspective there was huge pressure on the knights to be able to demonstrate that they were behaving well, that their conduct was beyond reproach. Not riding out to attack the Muslim light cavalry laid the knights open, in their own minds at least, to potential accusations of cowardice.

The other provocation was both more practical, and more compelling. The horses were being killed. There were spare mounts in the ranks but even these were gradually being lost. If the Turkic cavalry could get close enough to harm the horses, they would simultaneously be able to degrade the Franks' aggressive capabilities or, by threatening to do so, perhaps provoke them into making a rash and uncontrolled charge. As the day wore on, the Muslims:

> redoubled their blows on the Hospitallers [in the rear division], crushing and striking them and piling on the pressure in various ways . . . At this the master of the Hospital [Garnier of Nablus] went to the king. 'Lord King', he said, 'we are being violently attacked. We will be stained with eternal dishonour as if we did not dare to fight back. Each of us is losing his mount at no cost to the enemy. What more must we bear?'[38]

The pressure on the rearguard division eventually became so intense that the Frankish cavalry launched a charge to relieve the pressure. The charge was triggered by the marshal of the Hospitallers and Baldwin Carron, one of King Richard's household knights. Once the first men had broken ranks, and senior men at that, the opportunity to charge rippled through the rest of the rearguard.[39]

The timing of the charge was not ideal from Richard's perspective. He may have been trying to stop it being launched. But his sub-commanders on the ground had made their decision and were committed. He was left with little option other than to support them as best he could. He was able to control the rest of the army, to bring it up for close support. Reserves were quickly deployed to exploit the success of the initial charge, before the enemy could regroup and

before their more vulnerable infantry units could escape. Richard knew better than anyone that the Frankish cavalry charge was a rapier rather than a broadsword: potentially fragile, and surprisingly brittle in the wrong conditions, but difficult to fend off and deadly in the right hands.[40]

The charge from the rear division gradually gathered its own momentum:

> the Hospitallers and their detachments had kept ranks all that day as they rode; but now they immediately urged their horses to a gallop and charged manfully into the enemy. Likewise, each troop turned their horses around and charged the enemy, still keeping to their original order so that those who had been in the vanguard while they marched became the rearguard in the attack.[41]

It is interesting to see just how flexible the Frankish fighting march could be, particularly when well led and undertaken by good-quality troops. The rear division was able to about-face and charge into the enemy quickly. Richard was able to get the van and centre divisions to start moving before he went to reinforce the rear, and the entire army did an about-face and gradually moved back to support the charge of the Hospitallers and the others in the rear division. The movement of the army took place at a considered and disciplined pace, to ensure that no gaps opened up between the divisions, and the central 'Standard' wagon and rallying point 'gradually came up at a slow pace to the place where the army was engaging the Turks'.[42]

A new centre of gravity was created for the army as the 'Standard' halted 'not far from the contest so that they could provide a fixed place of refuge for all, for it would have been very difficult for their force to be dispersed'.[43] It is also noticeable that the Turkic cavalry fled from the crusader knights, probably just as frustrated and exhausted as the Franks after several days of inconclusive fighting, perhaps running short of arrows by this time and with tired horses. By doing so they exposed less agile 'fixed points' in Saladin's army, particularly the Egyptian infantry and foot volunteers, and King Richard was able to fall on them in a flank charge which they had little chance of evading or repelling.

Even from a Muslim perspective, the results were impressive. Baha' al-Din wrote that the Frankish cavalry:

> massed together and agreed on a charge . . . I saw them grouped together in the middle of the foot-soldiers. They took their lances and gave a shout as one man. The infantry opened gaps for them and they charged in unison along their whole line. One group charged our right wing, another our left, and the third our centre. Our men gave way before them.[44]

Although the charge had been triggered slightly sooner than Richard

had planned, the training and discipline of the Frankish army quickly took over. Muslim casualties were substantial, and the entire army was described as being 'either wounded in body or wounded in the heart'.[45]

But it is important to realise that the fighting march was not primarily the response of 'crusaders' to 'Muslim' armies. It was the response of sedentary societies, Byzantine and Frankish alike, to the threat posed by nomadic light cavalry. And it is significant that the fighting march formation was not employed against all Muslim opponents: just those which had a large Turkic cavalry component in them.

Where the confrontation was against the Fatimid Egyptians, for instance, no one thought that a fighting march was useful or necessary. The crusaders adopted a similar type of formation on their initial approaches towards the Fatimid army in Ascalon in 1099, at a time when they were unsure what an Egyptian army looked like, or how many mounted light archers they could field. But once they realised what they were up against, they never bothered to do so again. Similarly, when facing the smaller, purely 'askar-based forces from the Muslim states in Syria, there is little evidence of the fighting march formation being used. In Usama's many war stories from Shaizar, Antioch and Tripoli, for instance, the fighting (generally small-scale) is far more fluid than such a formation would permit.

The reasons behind this are clear. The fighting march was inevitably cumbersome and severely limiting in terms of being able to deal a fatal blow to the enemy. It was essentially defensive, a way of conserving military strength, not projecting it. It was not used unless it was absolutely necessary. It was a formation aimed at fighting nomads in particular, rather than Muslims in general. The fighting march was an effective way of limiting the downside for any force facing a Turkic army. By depriving the enemy of vulnerable flanks or a rear against which to attack, the formation meant that the Christian army was protected. But it also limited the upside. Ironically, it was usually a way of preventing a battle from taking place, a battle that would otherwise have been played out on terms favourable to their Turkic opponents.

Even the most famous application of the fighting march, the battle of Arsuf, was hardly a catastrophic defeat for the mounted archers that were harassing the Frankish column. With a considerable amount of planning and logistical support, even to the extent of being shadowed by a resupply fleet along the coast and, most importantly, being led by one of the foremost commanders of the day, the crusader army's greatest achievement was being able to manoeuvre in the face of the enemy. The battle of Arsuf was an embarrassing setback for

Saladin, and certainly a defeat, but within a couple of days he was still able to contest the crusaders' march.

Tactically, nomadic armies were extremely strong. Their weaknesses lay on an operational and strategic level. The real benefit of the fighting march was that it gave short-term battlefield survivability to a Frankish army, allowing them to stay in the field and restrict the movements of their Turkic opponents. This was always going to be a painful process. The discipline required to keep the men in check and in formation was painful. And it was painful to stand by while nomadic tribesmen burnt and pillaged the rural infrastructure that had so painstakingly been built up over decades.

But once the number of Turkic troops in the field had reached a critical mass, there was often no alternative. Nomads lose patience quickly and the trick was to still have an army intact and in the field when that happened. Once their opportunities for plunder were reduced, Muslim commanders inevitably found it increasingly difficult to keep large numbers of nomadic or semi-nomadic troops motivated. The real virtue of the fighting march was that it bought time.

The 'Combined Arms' Infantry Shieldwall

The high social status of the knights ensured that they received the lion's share of the attention in the chronicles of the Latin East. The knightly charge was the high-profile, potentially battle-winning moment of any major action. The infantry, if they were mentioned at all, were referred to in passing or where circumstances were so unusual that they could not be ignored.

And yet, as we have seen, the interdependency of the knightly cavalry and the Frankish heavy infantry was almost complete. The infantry 'combined arms' shieldwall formed the outer layers of the 'box' in each fighting march and a rallying point in more set-piece battles behind which the heavy cavalry could ready themselves before an attack, or regroup after a charge. This form of 'shieldwall', so often ignored in the chronicles, was a significant improvement on normal European practice, and a vital component in Frankish success on the battlefields of the Holy Land.

The shieldwall had precedents in infantry practice in western Europe, particularly in the northern provinces, but the innovation of introducing large numbers of crossbowmen behind the shielded ranks of heavy spearmen was an important one. As always, this was driven by need rather than by an abstract interest in military theory. For the first time since the fall of the Roman empire in the west, large numbers of high-quality missile-armed infantry were needed to protect the horses and keep enemy light cavalry at bay.

The most elaborate examples of the infantry shieldwall come from

the latter part of the twelfth century, but it is clear that archers could be grouped together to maximise their firepower from the very beginning of the crusader states. Even as early as 1103, for instance, at the siege of Acre, we find a Frankish officer with the title of 'magister sagittariorum' (master of bowmen), implying that he was a specialist commander of infantry archers.[46]

Part of the reason why a Frankish shieldwall could be effective was the sheer density it provided. In one engagement, for instance, we are told that the 'detachments kept themselves so closely together that an apple thrown into their midst would not fall to the ground without touching people or horses'.[47] This was partly to deter enemy cavalry: if the riders wanted to engage in hand-to-hand combat, they would be outnumbered, but even if they tried to close, their horses would naturally tend to shy away from an unbroken formation of heavily armed infantry, particularly spearmen.

The other advantage was the density of firepower. The Muslim light cavalry, manoeuvring around them at speed and engaging in archery firefights, would inevitably take up a great deal of space. Their bows were relatively light, which had an impact on their effective range, and they could never bring a high density of men to bear. The Frankish archers and crossbowmen, on the other hand, had a good range and their density meant that even though they might be outnumbered on the battlefield as a whole, they could generally bring a higher volume of fire to bear on individual Muslim cavalry units as they approached.

We are lucky that a rare but detailed description of how a Frankish infantry contingent operated exists from the battle for Jaffa, in the summer of 1192. The infantry contribution would normally have been brushed over lightly, if mentioned at all. As there were almost no knights present, however, and as it was an important victory for a small Christian army under King Richard I, the chroniclers had little choice but to include them in the narrative.[48]

Saladin's troops entered the lower town and suburbs of Jaffa after a short siege at the end of July 1192. Some of the Christian forces had managed to fall back into the citadel, but they knew they could not hold out for long. Richard rushed to lead a small Frankish army to their aid but, as they were a scratch force and had arrived by sea, they had almost no horses with them, and were unusually dependent on the infantry contingent.

The Muslim forces within the town were ejected but both sides rushed to move more troops into the area. The Christians were reinforced by the arrival of Henry, count of Champagne, with a single galley full of troops sent from Caesarea. The remainder of the Frankish forces were unable to break through Saladin's army, however, which

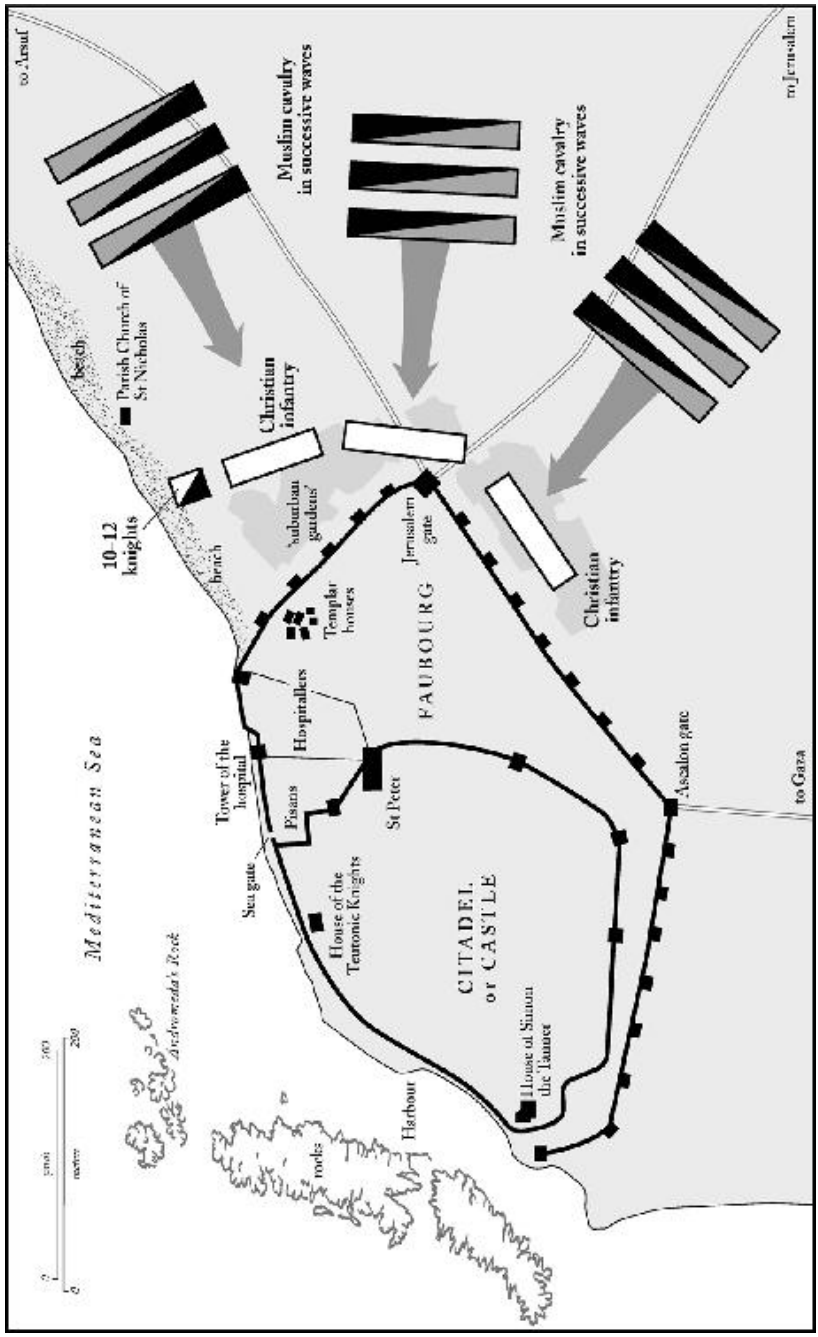
successfully blocked their way forward by land. As the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum* put it, the king 'could not have any of his army with him at that juncture except around 55 knights and up to 2,000 very tough infantry, crossbowmen and men at arms, Genoese and Pisans and others. He had also acquired from various places barely fifteen horses, good and bad.'[49] Clearly, a cavalry contingent of little more than a dozen men was not going to make a major contribution to the battle. Any chance of victory was going to be dependent on how the infantry performed.

Richard tried to put makeshift repairs in place to make the city more defensible, but these were bound to be insufficient, given the time available. Saladin, on the other hand, was able to bring significant new forces to bear. On the early morning of 5 August, he launched a surprise attack by his largely cavalry army, which seems to have been focused on the north-eastern side of the town, along the road to Arsuf. In the absence of a significant cavalry contingent, Richard was forced to rely heavily on defensive tactics that hinged on the ability of his infantry to repel large numbers of 'askar cavalry. The tiny cavalry unit he had with him, mounted on whatever horses could be scraped together, was placed on the relatively clear area alongside the beach. The crusader units 'were drawn up, wisely arranged into ranks and troops, and commanders were assigned to control each. The knights were sent nearer to the sea shore, not far from the church of St Nicholas and on its left side, since the more closely packed detachment of Turks was hurling itself in that direction. Again, the Pisans and Genoese were assigned to the area outside the suburban gardens.'[50]

We have unusually detailed information about the way the Frankish infantry lines were disposed, showing how the 'combined arms' nature of the shieldwall worked. The basic infantry combat team seems to have consisted of two pairs of men. Two spearmen in the front rank, providing cover with their shields and deterring enemy cavalry from making contact, 'went down on their knees, placing their round shields and long shields before them, lances [i.e. spears] in their hands'. Behind them were a pair of crossbowmen. They either alternated firing or the better marksman of the pair stood in front, between the two shields, while his partner loaded another crossbow behind him. This relay system maximised protection and rate of fire.[51]

The chronicler Ralph of Coggeshall, writing from the recollections of Hugh of Neville, one of Richard's tiny band of knights, suggested that the infantry also set up makeshift barricades in front of their lines, including tent pegs and lines to deter enemy horses.[52] Though some sources associate these improvised defences with the earlier fighting when the king landed on 1 August, this seems entirely

plausible: we know that Muslim cavalry were generally wary of approaching Frankish camps while on a fighting march (presumably at least partly because some form of improvised defences were normally constructed). As Baha' al-Din wrote, 'wherever they camped we despaired of achieving any success', and the Franks had used tents and tent ropes as impromptu defences in the final moments of the battle of Hattin, just a few years earlier.[53] Similarly, Walter the Chancellor wrote about makeshift Frankish infantry defences much earlier in the century: clearly, creating obstacles to deter cavalry with whatever materials lay to hand was normal procedure for crusader forces.[54]



Plan 2 The Battle of Jaffa, 1192
Source: After Pringle I, p. 265.

As with a Napoleonic square, it was enormously difficult to persuade horses to connect with such a formation. The first line of the 'askar 'approached and was about to charge into them, but because

our people waited without moving, they suddenly recoiled and turned aside. As the Turks retreated our crossbowmen pursued them with a dense volley of missiles, which transfixed a great many people and horses.'[55]

Successive lines of Turkic cavalry tried to contact the crusader infantry, but the unbroken units of spearmen, hastily constructed barricades and the volume of missiles meant that each assault failed:

> Immediately the next battle line followed, and realising that it could not break through our people because they were immobile, it turned aside as the first had done. Turks kept coming up in the same way . . . Yet, just as it seemed that they were about to engage in hand-to-hand combat . . . they pulled the reins and turned their horses round in another direction.[56]

The details of the engagement are interesting not because they were intrinsically unusual, but because it is rare to get such a focus on the activities of the common soldiery. In this instance, as the gentry were in short supply and as the infantry scored a significant victory without their aid, the chroniclers had little choice but to look at how well-ordered Frankish infantry operated. The victory was remarkable, and hence atypical, but only because of the absence of Frankish cavalry. Richard I was an exceptionally gifted commander, with a detailed knowledge of his men's capabilities and a respect for their expertise that was perhaps unusual: we do not see many crusading commanders, or indeed commanders of any kind, joining their men in the trenches to engage in sniper activities alongside their archers, as he did at Acre, or walking the infantry lines, as he did here. It is also true that these were good-quality infantry, with more Italian sailors and a lower proportion of poorly armed pilgrims or conscripts than might have been the case in some other armies.

But there is nothing to suggest that the tactical abilities and performance of the Frankish infantry at Jaffa in 1192 were particularly unusual. Given a good commander and an orderly deployment, this was exactly what crusader infantry were expected to do: provide a robust shieldwall, keep enemy cavalry at bay, and create a line behind which the Frankish knights could stay protected from enemy archery until the time to charge was right. The role was essentially 'passive', with limited emphasis on manoeuvrability other than when on a fighting march, but vital for the success of a Frankish army. The social status of the infantry meant that their role was often downplayed: the main difference at Jaffa was not how they were used, but rather that there was no celebrity focus to detract from them.

Frontiers, Castles and Sieges

A CRUSADER CASTLE JUST to the west of Jerusalem became the target for one of the frequent attacks launched by the Egyptian garrison of Ascalon. The Frankish field army was absent on campaign in Galilee: not too distant, but far enough away to create an opportunity for the Fatimids to do some damage in the south of the kingdom. This was a significant incursion, but it was a raid, rather than an army of conquest, and events showed that it was not equipped to besiege a fortified town.[1]

Pausing only to massacre some unarmed pilgrims and make provocative demonstrations in front of Ramla and Jaffa, the Egyptian cavalry quickly moved on to the much easier target of Castel Arnold ('Castrum Arnaldi'), a crusader castle 'which had been built with walls and ramparts in the mountainous region towards Jerusalem and stood out there to protect the district'. The Fatimid troops made a show of starting a siege of the small castle (almost certainly a bluff, given that they had no significant equipment to do so) and spent two days camped outside. The Frankish garrison commander was an experienced and senior figure, Gunfrid, the castellan of the Tower of David who had been at the heart of the fighting at the third battle of Ramla the previous year.[2]

On this occasion, however, Gunfrid's judgement deserted him, and the garrison's performance was poor. The Egyptian troops 'terrified the men living there to such an extent that Gunfrid . . . was only just able to save his life, and he sought the Saracens' right hands: he surrendered himself up and opened the gate of the fortress to the enemy'. The Fatimid cavalry soon reneged on whatever deal Gunfrid thought he had made, however. After the Egyptians took possession of the castle 'they at once demolished the fortress walls and put people they found to the sword, keeping only Gunfrid alive, whom they took off captive to Ascalon'. If he had held out for a couple of days, the fort would have been relieved; he should have known that Baldwin and

the royal army were mustering and would be with them soon.[3]

If the Egyptians were expecting a good ransom for him, they were sorely disappointed. Gunfrid's behaviour meant that no one was in a hurry to get him back. He was eventually shipped off to Cairo, where he stayed in prison for over thirty years. Despite some half-hearted negotiations by the kings of Jerusalem, it was native Christians, Armenians, who arranged his release: like a Victorian officer leaving his regiment at a time of crisis, Gunfrid was blackballed for his loss of nerve. Shunned by Frankish society, his peers never forgave him.[4]

Another episode, also in the south of the kingdom but this time at the castle of Kerak, progressed very differently. Here an isolated Frankish garrison held out, beyond all hope, despite being ordered to surrender by the lady of the castle. Their overlord had been executed while in captivity, and many of their wives and children had been taken prisoner. They refused to give up, however, as 'they did not wish to disgrace themselves or the Christian cause'. After defying their besiegers for almost a year and a half, and having eaten the last of the vermin and domestic pets, they were compelled to discuss terms. Their Muslim enemies were sufficiently impressed (and magnanimous) to allow them to leave unharmed, and even ransomed and released those members of their families who could be found.[5]

The extraordinary variation in the performance of these two castles and garrisons seems almost inexplicable. There were certainly many differences between the two incidents, but the answer lies in one vital difference that stands out above all others: time.

If there was an 'arms race' under way in the Middle East in the twelfth century that process is shown nowhere more clearly than in the way crusader castles and siege warfare developed over the course of the period. The capture of Castel Arnold took place in 1106. It had a fresh garrison, a senior leader to command its defence and a relief column that was only a few days' march away. But in comparison with Kerak, whose heroic defence took place in 1187–8, it was little more than a crude tower. The garrison of Kerak were leaderless and had no hope of relief. The size and sophistication of their defences, however, meant that they could hold out almost indefinitely, subject only to the availability of food and water.

There are few things that seem more permanent and unchanging than castles. But in the crusader states, the opposite was true. The crusader castles of the 1180s bore no resemblance to their earlier fortifications. A massive escalation of investment in military architecture had taken place in the course of the century: the upgraded castles that faced Saladin's vast armies were over four times the size of their predecessors and far more sophisticated. Given that this revolution absorbed an extremely high proportion of Frankish

military expenditure, it deserves some explanation.[6]

Siegecraft: Dialogue and Evolution?

In a period of such intense change, the traditional analysis would be to see these developments as part of a 'dialogue' (perhaps in this case better described as an increasingly frenzied argument), between besieger and besieged. As siege techniques improved, so the theory goes, one would expect defensive architecture to be ratcheted up accordingly; this would naturally spark off a new wave of efforts on the part of besiegers to improve their skills, until, as the current generation of castles showed signs of obsolescence, the onus fell back on the defenders to improve the quality of their fortifications. And so on, leading to escalating improvements in both offensive and defensive capabilities.

In cases such as the crusader states, where the changes in castle design were so dramatic as to be revolutionary, rather than merely evolutionary, the need to look for a root cause in changes in siegecraft is more compelling than ever.

We live in a time of 'disruptive technologies', and it is only natural that we should look for the driver of such revolutionary change to come from technical advances: better siege artillery, perhaps, or more effective engineering works. In fact, however, despite widespread suggestions to the contrary, the techniques of siegecraft in the twelfth century were relatively constant, and the few technological changes that did take place were entirely insufficient to account for the extraordinary developments in military architecture.

Throughout the period, there were two basic approaches to dealing with fortifications: going over them or going under them. All parties, whether they were Frankish or Byzantine, Fatimid or Turkic-Syrian, were, with differing degrees of emphasis, capable of using either approach to their advantage, and all had very similar techniques to help them do both, as circumstances dictated. In practice, however, all parties played to their respective strengths, most of which were ultimately dictated by demographics rather than technology.

Going Over

'Going over' was the favoured approach of crusader armies. This played to their strengths. Frankish forces were typically outnumbered but heavily armoured and more effective than their opponents in close combat. If even a few Frankish knights could be placed on the walls of a besieged city, the most likely outcome was that the enemy troops would fall back and the defence would collapse in the ensuing panic. Between 1099 and 1124 every one of the heavily fortified cities of the

Palestinian and Syrian coastline, with the single exception of the Egyptian border fortress of Ascalon, was captured by the crusaders. Significantly, this was achieved without the advantage of having a standing navy, despite the Muslim-held ports being supported and supplied with varying degrees of efficiency by the Fatimid fleet. If there was an 'argument' between offence and defence, the attackers (the Franks in this case) were certainly winning the debate in the first decades of the century.

Going over the walls could involve a combination of different techniques: deploying catapults to bombard the battlements and provide covering fire; massed archery to force the defenders to keep their heads down; scaling ladders for assault teams to get up the walls; siege towers to carry rams and light artillery but also, more importantly, to deliver heavily armoured men to the top of the walls.

Artillery always looked impressive and, as a result, has probably tended to attract more attention than it deserves, both from contemporary chroniclers and, more recently, from Hollywood. Significant effort went into the building and deployment of catapults, however, and this investment would not have been made if there was no perceived payback. As the Turkic-Syrian states grew in size from the 1130s onwards, they acquired the resources to radically increase their artillery capabilities. Zengi, lord of Mosul (1127–46), began to use artillery more regularly and, by the time of Saladin's campaigns in the 1180s, machines such as trebuchets were being used in ever greater numbers. This new capability was most obviously shown by the number of catapults that were being deployed. Less obviously, however, but just as importantly, they were also able to make major improvements with regard to the logistical issues associated with artillery, such as building up a cadre of experienced artillerists, improving transportation, storage and pre-positioning facilities.[7]

There were technological improvements too. Catapults (trebuchets) became bigger and more powerful during this period. The earliest machines of the crusader period were relatively light 'traction' engines, powered by pulling (hence 'traction') at the end of the short arm to propel projectiles towards their targets. At some point, probably towards the very end of the twelfth century, a more advanced form of catapult was introduced: the 'counterweight' trebuchet, so-called because it operated by replacing traction power with a heavy weight as a counterpoise. There may also have been some interim versions, incorporating incremental improvements in catapult design.[8] Interestingly, the introduction of new, heavier types did not consign the earlier models to oblivion. All models seem to have continued in use, with the earlier, lighter catapults presumably given a largely opportunistic role, while the powerful counterweight

trebuchets focused on the more challenging targets.[9]

But while artillery was recognised as being useful, it was rarely critical. Catapults of this period were not designed to knock down castle walls, and were entirely incapable of doing so under normal circumstances. In fact, there is no clear example in the entire twelfth century of castle walls being brought down by artillery. At the site of the siege of Arsuf in 1265, for instance, by which time catapults had tended to become both more powerful and more widely used, almost 3,000 artillery projectiles (stones) have been found. The vast majority of these were small rocks, designed for anti-personnel use. The walls themselves still stand testament to this: they show indentations where these rocks hit them but, more importantly, they are still standing.[10]

Rather, the main aim of artillery was to sweep defenders off the top of the walls, the battlements, or at least force them to keep their heads down, so that teams of men engaged in other tasks, such as miners or assault squads with ladders or in siege towers could go about their work more easily.[11]

The Franks used artillery, like everyone else, but their weapon of choice was the siege tower. It allowed them to gradually dominate a particular sector of the walls, giving a height advantage on the way in (allowing snipers to fire onto the battlements or streets below, for instance) and, once it had arrived, to deliver groups of heavily armoured elite troops onto the top of the defenders' defences. Siege towers were a strong statement of intent and the necessarily slow but remorseless nature of their advance meant that they had a debilitating effect on the morale of any city they were deployed against. Their effectiveness is proven by the degree of fear they inspired, and the increasingly desperate sorties and counter-measures that were deployed against them. Once a siege tower had been manoeuvred next to a wall, everyone knew that the siege was entering its final phases.[12]

The Franks could build siege towers on their own, given sufficient time and access to suitable materials. There are some indications, for instance, that the southern French, who tended to predominate in the County of Tripoli, had particular expertise in their construction.[13] The real unsung heroes of the siege tower in the Latin East, however, were the Italians. Their help was needed from the very first days of the crusader states. On 6 June 1099, two Genoese ships were among those trapped in the port of Jaffa by the Fatimid navy. The siege of Jerusalem, far inland, had stalled. Their crews decided that they could contribute most to the cause by dismantling their vessels rather than try to fight their way out, and transporting the timber, particularly the long beams of the masts, to help with the siege. Good timber was always scarce in the Middle East and the corner-posts of a siege tower required long beams if the strength and stability of the structure was

to be maintained.[14]

Shipbuilding skills were readily transferable to the construction of siege engines, and the combination of Italian naval expertise and seasoned wood created a turning point. William of Tyre wrote that, with Genoese help, the Franks 'easily accomplished works which before their arrival had seemed difficult and well-nigh impossible'.[15] In 1100, the siege of Haifa was brought to a similarly successful conclusion by a siege tower and catapults, all made by Venetian craftsmen, using their expertise in carpentry and naval engineering, and built using timbers taken from their ships. The Italian chronicles perhaps exaggerated their role on occasion, but the expertise and materiel they provided was clearly extremely helpful. Logistics were also a major issue, particularly in terms of transporting the long corner-beams, and here too the Italians played a vital role, moving key supplies by sea wherever possible or, as in the case of the siege of Jerusalem, using their engineering skills to carry the timbers inland.[16]

The siege tower had its weaknesses, however, and they were substantial. Suitable timber was scarce. They took time to build, during which enemy relief forces could be mustered and despatched. Expertise was required in their construction, otherwise they might collapse under their own weight, or with the encouragement of rocks thrown by enemy catapults. They required a level surface upon which to move, and creating this stable path, especially across enemy moats, required a lot of time and a great deal of courage on the part of those trying to move the tower forward. As the tower was moved closer to its target it became more vulnerable to fire, either from bonfires lit around its base by troops charging out from the town, or from naphtha thrown from the walls.

Most importantly, the logistics associated with siege towers were an absolute nightmare. On the coast, where Italian ships and naval artisans were, literally, able to do most of the heavy lifting, they were viable. Once the fighting moved inland, however, the Franks' 'super-weapon' was so difficult to deploy that it became almost unheard of. Tellingly, after the First Crusade, the only instance in which the Franks were able to build a siege tower inland was at Banyas in 1140. The Christian army had not transported timber to the siege, presumably because they hoped to find wood in situ. In the event, however, 'in all that region no suitable material for such a purpose was to be found'. Embarrassingly, the crusaders were forced to ask their Muslim allies for help: the depots at Damascus had 'tall beams of great size which long ago had been set aside especially for such a purpose', which were carried to Banyas for them.[17] Siege towers were difficult to build, slow to manoeuvre and fraught with logistical difficulties. If you were fighting inland, and had other alternatives, as

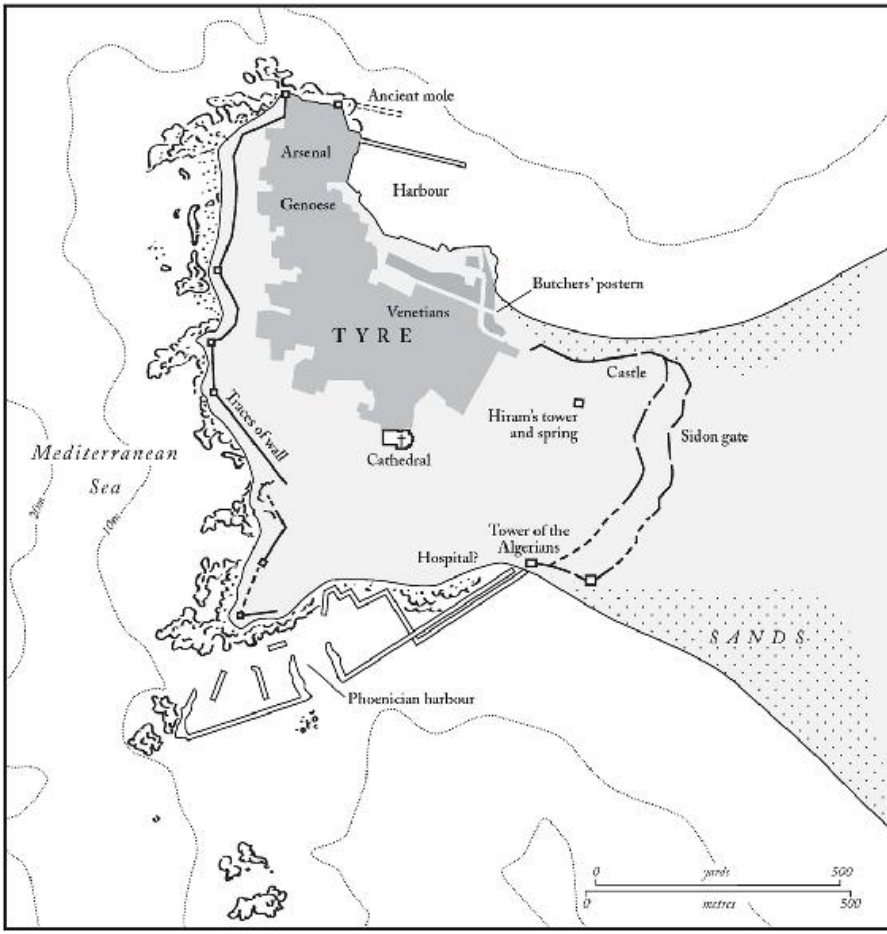
Muslim armies generally did, they would never be the favoured option.

The example of Tyre shows how Frankish siege techniques worked in practice. The city's defences were spectacular: a landward approach was only possible down a causeway leading to a flooded moat, which was in turn followed by a triple bank of walls with massive towers. Entrance was through a single, highly fortified gate. On the seaward side, a heavily defended harbour, with double layers of walls and towers, created safe anchorage for the defenders' ships.

The siege was opportunistic, driven partly because of political turmoil in Tyre, and the long-term deterioration of the city's economic situation as the Franks' loose blockade by land continued to bite. The additional factor, however, and one that turned a helpful environment into an unmissable opportunity, was the presence of a large and victorious Venetian fleet on the coast of Palestine. Italian shipping was the variable asset that made the prospect of besieging Tyre so compelling and so much more likely to succeed.[18]

As well as Venetian soldiers and an army of crusaders from eastern Europe, France and Germany, the fleet brought the precious specialist supplies that any successful siege needed: well-seasoned beams, critical for the construction of siege towers which 'could be used for scaling and seizing the high walls of cities'. They had brought their own siege equipment with them from Venice but had also been able to capture an Egyptian squadron carrying additional stores from al-Arish to their base at Ascalon.[19]

King Baldwin II was in captivity, having been taken prisoner by Turkic troops in 1123 while campaigning in the north, but even without the head of state, this was too good a chance to pass up. The patriarch of Jerusalem mustered the army of the kingdom, together with the True Cross, and undertook the usual negotiations with the Venetians: in return for their support, they were to get a third of the captured city and its surrounding lands.[20] Local naval supremacy was total. The siege started on 16 February 1124, and the Venetians felt comfortable enough to beach their galleys on the shore near Tyre, leaving only a token screening force at sea to keep watch.[21]



Plan 3 Tyre
Source: After Barber 2012, p. 309 and Pringle IV, p. 179.

On land, the army settled down for a serious and protracted siege. Field fortifications were dug all around the landward approaches to Tyre (not difficult, given that it was on a causeway). Expecting trouble from the 'askar of Damascus and its Turkic mercenaries, these defences were built to face outwards as well as inwards, 'thus enclosing and protecting the entire army'.[22]

The nature of the geography, funnelling everyone's attention down a narrow causeway and towards a single gate, meant that this siege was always going to be a slogging match rather than one which could be won by elegance or guile. The key to this slogging match was an artillery duel to soften up the battlements and siege towers with the height to deliver the coup de grâce. As ever, the presence of Italian naval craftsmen added much-needed skills, but the Frankish colonists also played a major role in constructing siege engines of all kinds as the 'patriarch and the nobles of the realm . . . called together

carpenters and skilful builders, provided the necessary materials and directed them to build a tower of great height'.[23]

Eventually, artillery batteries were constructed, as well as two massive siege towers. Having more than one siege tower in operation, at least to start off with, was very important. They took a long time to build and if a solitary tower was destroyed, the whole siege could stall. The finished product was awe-inspiring. An anonymous Syrian chronicler described them as 'two strong towers of wood, of seven stories, each ten cubits high. They covered them with strong planks of damp oak that naphtha might have no effect on them'.[24]

As in previous sieges, the Italians were prepared to play an active role on land too, and alongside the Frankish army they 'also built similar machines and set them up in strategic positions'.[25] They not only built the siege equipment, however, but also manned their own batteries of catapults. The fleet was beached for most of the siege, so large numbers of Venetian troops were available for specialist duties on land.

For their part, the garrison of Tyre also had their own artillery, and were extremely adept at using it. Interestingly, rather than engaging in counter-battery attrition, they concentrated their fire on the Frankish siege towers as they inched their way forwards: bigger and higher-value targets. They had a great deal of success in hindering their progress and the 'fear inspired by these flying stones enabled the enemy to become masters of that particular [sector], for none of the Christians dared to stay in that vicinity'.[26]

These were not light wall-mounted machines, designed to harass the besiegers. The Muslims were using large catapults, sending huge rocks hurtling towards the crusaders' positions. Even with the presence of the Frankish armies of Jerusalem and Tripoli and experienced Venetian siege engineers, the Tyrians were winning the artillery duel. The besiegers were forced to look for specialist artillery skills and sent 'to Antioch for a certain Armenian', who 'came immediately and displayed so much skill in directing the machines and hurling the great stone missiles that whatever was assigned to him as a target was at once destroyed without difficulty'.[27]

With his arrival, the Christians seem to have quickly won the counter-battery contest, but there was clearly something a bit special about the artillery duel at Tyre. This was partly due to the protagonists. North of Ascalon, Tyre was the last Muslim outpost on the Palestinian coast. It had superb defences and it was full of refugees: the richest merchants; the best engineers; the most desperate people who had nowhere else to go. Skills and motivation were there in abundance. Likewise with the Christian armies. The Franks were as experienced at coastal sieges as they were ever going to be, and they

had the support of some of the best naval engineers and craftsmen from the Venetian fleet. Eventually, they also had Havedic, their Armenian celebrity artillerist, a shining example of the growth of military professionalism in the course of the twelfth century. This was always going to be a clash of veterans. Syriac as well as Frankish sources suggest that there was something unusual, and unusually deadly, at work in the artillery duel that characterised the final weeks of the siege.[28]

While the artillery duel may have been unusual, most of the other tactics were traditional, well tried and tested by both sides. There was the usual tussle to try to create a dominant position on the approaches to the city by sweeping the ground with archery fire and ballistas (large siege-crossbows).[29] Although this was relatively tactical in nature, it was vital that the defenders should do everything in their power to harass the besiegers as they got closer to the walls, and to weaken their morale by inflicting a steady stream of casualties.

Apart from the artillery duels and the siege towers, the other main action in the siege was the sorties from the gates. These were intensely focused, as 'there was but one entrance to the city and a single gate . . . the entire city was almost an island . . . except at a certain narrow place through which was the approach to the gates. At this point, various engagements both of cavalry and infantry were continually going on'. Tyre was a very large, well-fortified city, whose normally large population was swollen still further by the influx of refugees from the coastal cities that had been captured by the crusaders in the preceding years. This, combined with the garrison, meant that there were always enough volunteers for skirmishing around the besiegers' camp.[30]

Sorties were often the domain of young men, eager to impress. At one point a particularly determined sortie was launched, and the Tyrians managed to set light to one of the siege towers. A fierce fight broke out around it. A Frankish soldier managed to get to the top of the burning platform and poured water on the fire as it was passed up to him. His actions drew a large volume of fire from the towers of Tyre, but he survived. The young Tyrian men who had carried out the attack were less lucky. Cut off from the gate, they were wiped out.[31]

The Tyrians were still fighting, but, given the city's large civilian population and the tight blockade by land and sea, the siege could have only one ending unless help arrived quickly. If the Frankish forces were resolved to continue, the only realistic hope for Tyre was either Egyptian intervention by sea, or Damascene intervention by land.

The Fatimid military had a strong presence in Ascalon but, having been overwhelmingly defeated the previous year, did not want to

confront the Frankish field army directly. Tughtigin of Damascus made more effort than the Egyptians and raised a large army to try to relieve Tyre. He fared little better, however. The Damascene army, with large numbers of Turkic light cavalry and the heavier, 'regular' cavalry of the 'askar, moved to within four miles of the Frankish siegeworks and camped threateningly on a riverbank, awaiting further reinforcements from Damascus and, as they hoped, Egypt.[32]

Meanwhile, there was continuing talk of the Egyptian navy coming to the rescue. The Damascenes and the garrison at Tyre believed a Fatimid squadron to be on the way. The Christians thought so too. Within the siege camp it was 'rumoured that an Egyptian fleet, much larger than usual and equipped with more than the ordinary number of armed soldiers, would arrive within three days with reinforcements of men and the necessary food and supplies for the Tyrians'.[33]

The Christian response was confident and, from Tughtigin's perspective, extremely unhelpful. The Venetian fleet assumed battle formation and moved aggressively down the coast as far as Scandelion, looking for the Egyptian fleet. As there was no sign of them, however, they returned to Tyre and once again beached the majority of their galleys on the shore. The Fatimid navy was a 'no show' yet again. Having already been beaten by the Venetians in recent months, they were loath to try their luck again.[34]

What the Franks chose not to do, however, was even more significant. Far from deciding to retire, as Tughtigin had hoped, they chose to continue the siege as normal. For, although some of their best troops were diverted to confront the Damascenes, the city militia contingents and most of the Venetian army were left in situ, and were still strong enough to look after the catapults and towers, ensuring that the siege continued uninterrupted. William of Bures and the count of Tripoli took their men out to within two miles of Tughtigin's positions. On hearing of their arrival, and in the absence of the Egyptian fleet, the army of Damascus went home. With their supplies almost exhausted, and siege towers edging towards the walls, Tyre surrendered on 7 July 1124.[35]

The assault on Tyre demonstrates most of the basic ingredients of a Frankish siege: mobile towers and other engines, catapults and rams, a field army prepared to behave aggressively in the face of enemy interference and, as this was a coastal operation, a tight blockade by land and sea. What is perhaps less obvious, however, are the weaknesses that were inherent in the Frankish approach to siegecraft, even when, as in this instance, they were successful. Their capabilities, particularly the lack of disposable manpower, meant it was necessary to work slowly and methodically, and this was only possible if there was no imminent threat from a relief force. This was sometimes the

case in the first quarter of the twelfth century, when the Muslim states were at their most disunited and when crusader sieges were mainly on the coast (and therefore at the furthest points from the centres of Egyptian and Turkic power), but such circumstances became increasingly unlikely thereafter.

Similarly, this same methodical approach was essential to ensure that there was a minimum risk to life, as they did not have many lives to lose. But, critically, it was also the case that these lower-risk, 'belt and braces' techniques made the Franks extremely dependent on the availability of Italian or other navies to provide expertise, logistics, materials and manpower. Once the crusader states turned their attentions further inland and conducted sieges on their own, their success rate plummeted.

In the north, for instance, Aleppo was a major centre of Muslim power and was far too close for comfort to Antioch, and to the County of Edessa. Similarly, Shaizar, the Munqidh stronghold, was always a dangerous neighbour on the northern marches of the County of Tripoli. There were strategic parallels further south. Damascus was dangerously close to the borders of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Each of these centres represented a threat to the crusader states, and any of them would have constituted a major prize. That this strategic truth was recognised by all contemporaries is shown not just by the level of military activity which was devoted to destabilising them, but also by the huge efforts the Franks expended on conducting sieges to try to capture them. The major Muslim cities were attacked in earnest on several occasions, in increasingly desperate attempts to open up the interior. Aleppo was the objective for two serious campaigns (1124–5 and 1138); Shaizar was besieged twice (1138 and 1157); and Damascus was the target of concerted assaults in 1129 and 1148. Each siege ended in failure, however, despite the fact that crusader field armies were generally highly feared and respected. Why was that?

Away from the coast, crusader sieges usually ended in recriminations. Recriminations about the weather. Recriminations about poor decisions. Recriminations about treachery or bribery. Even recriminations about the favour of God and how he expressed himself. But these were all just a function of frustration: a frustration that sought tactical answers and solutions for a strategic problem that was ultimately insoluble.

The failure of these sieges was never a result of the lack of a diplomatic strategy. There were well-focused, and generally successful, attempts to generate allies and reinforcements for each of the key expeditions. The campaign against Damascus in 1129, for instance, had been preceded by two missions to the west, which had succeeded in persuading large numbers of crusaders to help with the

cause. Similarly, the campaign against Damascus in 1148 was accompanied by the French and German armies of the Second Crusade, who had been lobbied intensively by the king of Jerusalem to help.

The tactical reality, however, was that Frankish armies, once inland, were outnumbered, surrounded and isolated in enemy territory: beyond the coast, it was unusual for any crusader siege to gain sufficient purchase. Even when it did so, far from a Christian fleet, and hence lacking a cadre of experienced siege engineers or sufficient logistical support to transport timber, the crusaders could not bring sieges to a swift and successful conclusion.

The Franks have a reputation for being good at siege warfare in the early part of the twelfth century, but are thought to have suffered from a gradual decline in performance over the successive decades.[36] In fact, even this analysis probably flatters them. Sieges, if they were far inland, generally needed to be quick: if they went on too long, the besiegers lost momentum, they suffered from a lack of supplies and, most importantly, enemy relief columns appeared. Unlike their Muslim opponents, the Franks never had sufficient manpower to throw at a siege, swamping the defenders and achieving a quick result. Often, they did not even have enough men to enforce a strict blockade. At the 'siege' of Damascus in 1148, for instance, Turkic and local Syrian troops came and went through most of the city gates without fear of interference from the crusaders for the entire duration.[37]

When Frankish sieges were successful, it was generally because they had naval allies to hand, rather than because of their inherent abilities. Left to their own devices, the crusaders were never very good at siege warfare: the events of the latter decades of the century merely brought to the surface the underlying weaknesses that had previously been masked by the frequent presence of Christian fleets in the eastern Mediterranean up to 1124.

Going Under

At its most basic, the undermining of castle walls required two main ingredients: expert miners and sappers to do the work efficiently and quickly; and sufficient suppressive fire, directed at the defenders on the battlements above, to allow them to carry out their work with the minimum of interference.

Although both sides knew the principles of mining, the balance of expertise and resources lay with the Muslim armies. The level of emphasis which they placed on sapping and mining was shown by the degree of specialisation involved, both in terms of the sourcing of the miners and the skills they employed. Many local lords had access to

specialist troops, but there were two particular centres of excellence: Khurasan and Aleppo. Khurasanian miners appear frequently in the sources. They were highly sought after and increasingly became part of the standing armies of the growing Turkic-Syrian states. Similarly, the miners of Aleppo were widely recognised for their skills, even by the Franks: Richard I, for instance, used Aleppan miners, captured at the siege of Acre, to help undermine the walls of Muslim-held Darum.[38]

The Muslim focus on mining was also reflected in a degree of specialisation that we do not see among the Franks. One group, the naqqabin, were particularly expert at mining operations, digging, excavating and working with the wooden structures that were needed to support mineshafts. These men worked closely with other specialists, the hajjarin, who were stoneworkers skilled in demolitions, and particularly valuable in dealing with the large foundation stones of a castle.[39]

The Muslim siege of Kafartab, in 1115, is a good example of how such mining might work. Muslim forces were besieging the Frankish-held town of Kafartab with its small mixed garrison of Franks and native Christians. Usama decided to take a look at the mining works. In his writings, he invariably tries to put a good spin on his role, but even he cannot entirely disguise his unpopularity and the suspicion with which he was often treated. This was no exception. For reasons that are not entirely clear, he was disliked by the local Muslim troops and had to make his reconnaissance in secret. Perhaps they were inclined to guard their trade secrets closely. Perhaps, like many others, they just did not like him. Whatever the reasons, however, Usama's anecdotes give an excellent first-hand insight into what a mining operation might have looked like.

The Muslim forces had already penetrated the town walls, and were focused on capturing the keep, to which the surviving members of the garrison had fallen back. The specialist Khurasanian miners had entered the fosse 'and began digging a tunnel [i.e. in the moat, in this case outside the keep]. The Franks were convinced of their own destruction, so they set fire to the citadel and burned the roof, which fell upon the horses, beasts of burden, sheep, pigs and captives, burning them all up. But some of the Franks remained on the top of the citadel, clinging to its walls.'[40]

Usama's curiosity got the better of him and he:

> descended the fosse, with arrows and stones falling on us like rain, and entered the tunnel. I saw there a very clever thing: they had tunnelled from the fosse to the barbican [i.e. the gateway to the keep], and on either side of the tunnel they had set up posts, over which they stretched a plank to prevent the earth above it from falling in. They extended the tunnel along in this way using timbers right up to the base of the barbican, keeping it supported, and

> reached as far as the foundations of the tower. The tunnel here was narrow, as it was only intended as a way to get to the tower.[41]

The tunnel was wider as it reached the citadel, however, and 'supporting it on timbers, and, a little bit at a time, they started carrying away the little bits of chipped away stone. The floor of the tunnel, on account of the stone chipping, became like mud.'[42]

The miners then:

> set about cutting up dry wood and stuffing the tunnel with it. Early the next morning, they set it ablaze. We had put on our armour and marched to the fosse, under a great shower of stones and arrows, to launch an assault on the citadel once the tower collapsed. As soon as the fire began to do its work, the layers of mortar between the stones of the wall began to fall out, then the wall cracked and the tower fell. We had thought that, once the tower fell, we would be able to advance on the enemy. But only the outer face of the tower fell; the inner wall remained as it was. So we stood there until the sun became too hot for us, and then went back to our tents having suffered a lot of damage from all the stones.

In the course of the afternoon, unarmoured Muslim infantry were able to scramble up the face of the barbican, using the stones of the wall's inner core as handholds, and break into the upper sections of the tower.[43]

It is clear that mining operations had to be extremely close to the walls if they were to be effective within a realistic period of time: Usama mentions that the entrance to the mine was within throwing (or dropping) distance of stones hurled from the top of the tower, and that the assault team, of which he was a part, took casualties from rocks as they waited for the fired mine to do its work, even though the garrison had no catapults. All of this made it essential that miners and other engineering workers, together with any assault teams, should be protected as far as possible from interference by defenders on the battlements.

The natural corollary of this was that successful mining also required the ability to direct suppressive fire at the enemy battlements. Having artillery certainly helped, and it was used more frequently by Muslim armies as the century progressed, but the old-fashioned approach was far simpler and potentially just as effective: using massed archers to lay down a high volume of fire at appropriate moments.

The Franks had crossbowmen and archers, and they could be extremely dangerous. But these were snipers rather than the main body of the army. Crossbowmen were still thought of as 'specialists', and there were rarely enough archers in a Frankish besieging force. Among Muslim armies, however, archery skills were both widespread and of a very high quality, particularly among the increasingly

numerous Turkic mercenaries.

As we have seen, both Frankish and Muslim armies were able to field siege artillery which could help to damage the battlements and lay down suppressive fire in the run-up to an assault. Given the smaller numbers of archers and crossbowmen at their disposal, however, Frankish armies found it difficult to lay down such fire on a consistent basis. Turkic-Syrian armies had no such constraints.

Taking Banyas as an example, the siege of 1132 began as the Turkic cavalry 'dismounted in a body, and discharged a hail of arrows at the defenders upon the wall'. The garrison were so cowed by this arrow-storm that they 'concealed themselves, and not a man of them showed his head upon it again because of the multitude of archers, leaving the Khurasanian miners to quickly do their work at the base of the fortifications'.[44] Similarly, when Banyas came under siege again in 1157, the small garrison were suppressed by catapults and the archery of the 'fighting men of the Turkmens, who had come in large numbers and a vast host': a tower in the town walls collapsed soon after, and the Muslim troops poured in.[45] By the time of the Hattin campaign, those Frankish castles that had not been upgraded were woefully vulnerable to the huge volume of firepower which the Muslim armies of the period could bring to bear. The formerly formidable town of Tiberias was captured in a single day (2 July 1187), as massed archery masked the actions of miners at the base of a tower. When this collapsed, Saladin's troops scaled the walls on assault ladders, and the entire town was overrun within a matter of moments.[46]

A Dialogue of Violence?

Contrary to what one might expect, although there were certainly differences in terms of preference, there is little to suggest that either side had a significant technological edge, and even less to suggest that there were sufficient changes in intrinsic capability over time to explain the shift in castle design.

Technological advances are difficult to pinpoint but, even when they did take place, there is little evidence that they produced results which were so profound as to justify the revolutionary changes in castle design that took place in the 1170s and 1180s. There are some suggestions that the Franks may have had an advantage in terms of developing a four-wheeled cart with turning axle that helped to move the large beams needed to create strong siege towers, but the evidence is sparse and inconclusive and, as the Franks were unable to transport the material needed for siege towers any significant distance inland, their impact seems to have been minimal.[47] More importantly, the latter part of the twelfth century saw the introduction of improved types of catapults, and particularly the counterweight trebuchet. In

terms of practical outcomes, however, the effect of these new catapults is far less clear-cut. They may have been better, but the bottom line was that they were still unable to create breaches in castle walls. Ultimately, of course, if the effect of their introduction had been profound, its impact would have been obvious and we would not have a continuing debate about when, or even if, the introduction took place.

Technology does not provide a sufficient explanation for the radical changes we find in castle-building in the twelfth century. If we want to find the real drivers of this 'arms race', we are going to have to look elsewhere.

Crusader Castles: From Impromptu to Impregnable

Phase One: The Age of Kings and Princes, 1099–1124

The first two decades of the young Frankish states were in some ways the Golden Age of the crusader military. They were few in number but hardened veterans, and full of confidence. Everything seemed possible. Yet, in this period, when the Frankish footprint in the east needed to be established as strongly and as quickly as possible, we find almost no 'crusader' castles. Of the 165 castles that we know of in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem only 13 can be firmly established as 'new-build' castles that pre-date the fall of Tyre in 1124, and most of these were either very small forts or defensive towers.[48] This seems strange from our perspective, but was in fact inevitable, given the resources available at the time and the choices with which the crusaders were faced.

Practical considerations dictated that castle-building could never be a priority in this period. The few castles that were built were only small, almost impromptu-looking structures compared to later examples, and even they could only be built in strategically sensitive locations by those who had the money to do so. The people most likely to have those kinds of resources were the rulers: the kings and princes of the new Frankish states, and their greater magnates. Limited resources needed to be funnelled into the two main areas where they were needed most: trying to capture the Muslim-held cities on the coast that were essential for the crusaders if they were to maintain their lines of communication back to Europe; and keeping the local Turkic-Syrian powers to the east off balance, defending against attacks but also probing aggressively for weakness.[49]

Beyond this, the first generation of crusader fortresses were fairly rudimentary. Strategy is about priorities and choices: what you choose not to do is just as important as the actions you take. Accordingly, as one might expect given the limited resources available, the building of

new castles on the eastern frontiers was not prioritised. The Muslim enemies of the southern crusader states were still disunited and largely incapable of making concerted assaults from the east. Existing fortifications, whether Muslim or Byzantine, were therefore used wherever possible, and castle-building from scratch by the crusaders during this phase was surprisingly uncommon.

Even when they were built, the first frontier castles were simple, designed to be jumping-off points for raids rather than some medieval equivalent of the Maginot line. They had to be sufficient to create a base and an effective mustering point for troops that, more often than not, were on aggressive missions. In case of disaster, Christian field armies could be expected to arrive soon and were generally masters of the battlefield. Workmanlike rather than awe-inspiring fortifications were sufficient for the task at hand.

We tend to think of the Franks as being on the defensive. This is partly because they have become somewhat characterised by their castles (and castles, again, in an over-simplified way, are seen as 'defensive'). It is partly because we know that they were perennially outnumbered and surrounded. It is largely also because, with hindsight, we are aware that their long-term presence in the region was not tenable.

None of this was necessarily reflected on the ground, however, or in the mindset of the Frankish settlers in the first years of the crusader states. The early decades of the crusader states were heady. There were no fixed frontiers. There were setbacks; occasionally there were disasters. But everything seemed possible to the first generations of crusaders. For most of the twelfth century the Frankish states were aggressive and proactive. If a Frankish army was on the move, it was something to worry about.

This was reflected in the way they treated 'frontiers'. If we see evidence of castles being built on what we now see as 'boundaries' this does not mean that they were either defensive, or immutable, a fixed line to be held at all costs. On the contrary, frontiers were the current 'zone' of military sustainability, an area from which power could be projected and, if things progressed satisfactorily, these zones would naturally edge aggressively onwards towards areas currently held by the enemy.

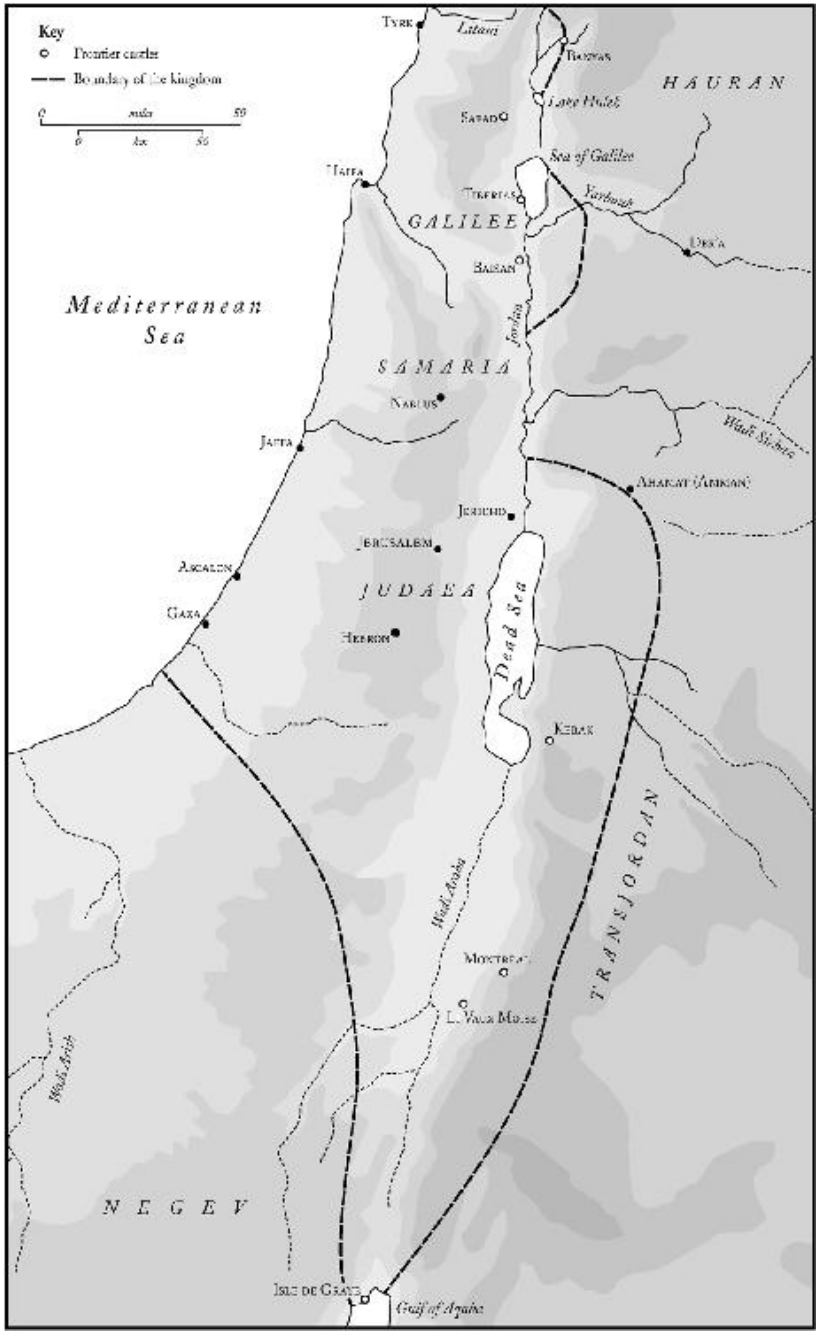
What we view now as defensive 'frontier' castles were often in reality an active and aggressive challenge to enemy control of a region. Castles might be built by the king, but would then often be entrusted to marcher lords who were selected for their qualities of aggression and initiative. For contemporaries, castles facing off against Aleppo or Damascus, for instance, were 'frontier' castles only for as long as it took to bring those cities back under Christian control.[50]

Even where they did have a major defensive role, it is important to see castles in a more nuanced way. We talk blithely of castles 'commanding' a valley, 'dominating' a road or 'controlling' a region, but what does that really mean? How, in practice, could a garrison of, say, 200 troops in a castle ever prevent an enemy army of 10,000 men moving down a road, or pillaging a valley? Castles gave significant advantages to their owners in both aggressive and defensive situations. They were so expensive to build and maintain that these advantages must have been recognised as considerable. But they were not a rigid line of defence, and no medieval general would have seen them as such.[51]

Other than the southern border with Fatimid Egypt, the two main 'frontier hotspots' of the Latin Kingdom were the Transjordan (the 'Oultrejourdain') and eastern Galilee.

On one level, the extent of the military investment that went into the Transjordan is puzzling. The obvious strategic reason for extending this far south would be to create difficulties of communication and coordination between the two main Muslim enemies of the Latin Kingdom: the Fatimid Egyptian regime in Egypt, and the Turkic-controlled state of Damascus. In practice, however, there was not a lot of communication and coordination to disrupt at this time. The Sunni rulers of Syria and the Shi'ite Egyptians were natural enemies on religious grounds and, indeed, before the crusaders turned up to disrupt local geopolitics, they had been enthusiastically fighting each other for control of Palestine.

So, although the effort to separate these two Muslim opponents assumed great importance in the second half of the twelfth century, it was hardly a key objective in the early years. Instead, the motivation seems to have been largely economic. The Transjordan was the crossroads between Egypt, Arabia and Mesopotamia. The caravan routes across the desert from Damascus to Egypt and beyond were highly lucrative. Whoever could control and tax the passage of goods or pilgrims on their way to the Muslim holy places would reap rich rewards.



Map 5 Early Frontier Castles
Source: After Pringle Sec., p. 142 and Kennedy 1994, p. xvi.

There were also demographic riches. There was a significant Christian population still living in the Transjordan, and for a state in desperate need of warm bodies, this was potentially extremely helpful,

whether as peasant labour, to repopulate Jerusalem (non-Christians having recently been banned from living there), or as auxiliary troops for the army.

For all these reasons, the fortification of the Transjordan was, in the first instance at least, a royal initiative. With few men and barely enough money to pay them, Baldwin I was always eager to find ways of improving his cash-flow. He had first visited the area in 1100, when he ascended the throne and was looking to make his presence felt in the farthest corners of the kingdom. He was eventually able to wrest control of the desert road and its Turkic-garrisoned castle away from the Damascenes entirely. It is not clear whether the Franks decided to occupy the castle they had captured, but there was certainly a Frankish castle there from 1144 (called Li Vaux Moise), and possibly from 1127 onwards.[52]

Baldwin took a small army back down to the desert in 1115 to look at ways of more fully exploiting the economic benefits of the region. The relatively sophisticated nature of the settlement he established there, around the castle he modestly called 'Montréal', the Royal Mountain, implies that the expedition was long-planned, rather than some random decision when he got there and saw the opportunities offered by its strategic position.[53]

The castle must have been rudimentary at this stage, given that it was so far from the centre of the kingdom, with all the difficulties of access to supplies and craftsmen that would imply. The initial construction took only eighteen days to complete: presumably this was enough time to establish some security for the garrison that was left there, a simple curtain wall, but little else.

But the castle was well situated. Baldwin 'placed a garrison of both cavalry and infantry forces there and granted them extensive possessions', and the 'fortress dominated the entire district adjacent to it'.[54] It grew to become a civil as well as military base for the Franks, and the security it offered encouraged many local Christians to settle nearby. The expedition of 1115 was such a success that he decided to extend the Frankish presence in the area, and another expedition the following year probably resulted in the building of a small castle down on the Gulf of Aqaba, which became known to the Franks as the castle of the Isle de Graye.[55]

The castles of the Transjordan were militarily important, and increasingly so, but the threat from the area was initially infrequent and, when it did arise, generally visible and containable. The distance from the heartland of the kingdom, and from its Muslim opponents, meant that incursions emanating from the 'Oultrejourdain' could usually be met by an army mustered by the king, and in a timely manner. Emergencies were rare. The region could stay in royal hands

for the time being, together with its revenues.

Galilee, the other main frontier, was entirely different. It was so close to Turkic-controlled Damascus, with its large groups of nomadic mercenaries, that emergencies could erupt in an instant. The kings of Jerusalem, quite apart from their day job, were hands-on military leaders par excellence: they were often elsewhere, helping the northern crusader states, or fighting the Egyptians. In their absence, someone had to be constantly on hand to deal with Turkic raids and to apply economic and military pressure on Damascus. This was a full-time job: the task of holding Galilee would inevitably have to be outsourced.[56]

The trouble was that the requirements for the job were an almost total match for that of the much less welcome post of 'over-mighty subject'. The first holder of the lordship of Galilee, the wonderfully energetic and transparently ruthless Tancred, saw this very clearly. He regarded the king of Jerusalem as an irritating peer rather than as his overlord, and did not mind who saw it. His efforts to gain a seaport on the Palestinian coast, and hence direct access back to Europe, were an overt attempt to create a new and independent crusader state: a state whose initial capital was Tiberias, but which could, with sufficient energy and luck, eventually be Damascus.[57]

None of this happened. Tancred was kicked upstairs to the northern state of Antioch, and the Turkic troops of Damascus ensured that it was never captured by the Christians. But the essence of the problem remained. Anyone holding the fief had to have great personal initiative, be aggressive, ambitious, energetic and militarily effective: incursions took place so quickly that no one could wait for the entire kingdom's field army to be mustered. All of which meant that the custodians of Galilee had to have their own army, and their own castles. Tensions between the Galilean lords and the monarchy were always evident. They called themselves the 'princes of Galilee'. The royal chancery styled them 'lords of Tiberias'. It was a ritual which acted as a metaphor for the tension, and it was a game that continued throughout the twelfth century.

Despite this, however, the bonds of loyalty held: inter-Frankish rivalries were rarely a luxury that anyone could afford for long. There were inevitable disputes. Gervase of Bazoches, who was given the fief in 1106, seems to have had a falling-out with the king, but they were quickly reconciled, shortly before he was captured and executed, and his scalp of long white hair became a Muslim mascot.[58]

Building and manning the local castles seems largely to have been delegated to the princes of Galilee, and they accepted the task with enthusiasm. Tancred was only in post for a few months before he was eased out, but even in that short space of time he set about re-

fortifying and improving the defences of Baisan and Tiberias.[59] His similarly short-lived successor, Hugh of Fauquembergues, built a large hilltop castle at Safad in 1102. It seems to have stayed in the hands of the Galilean nobility, and until *c.* 1168 it was in the possession of the constable of Tiberias.[60] Using these castles as their jumping-off point, the princes of Galilee were able to maintain an aggressive stance towards Damascus for much of the twelfth century.

Phase Two: The Age of the Lords, 1125–69

With the fall of Tyre in 1124, all the Palestinian coastal cities, with the exception of Ascalon, were in Christian hands. Resources were freed up to push into the hinterland, and to increase the pace of colonisation. A series of more substantial 'phase two' castles were built from the late 1120s onwards, which were a significant improvement on the often relatively makeshift fortifications that had characterised the first decades of Frankish rule.

Castle-building in this period took three main forms: helping to put a new feudal structure in place, with all the architectural and social familiarity that this implied; establishing more effective defences against Ascalon, the last remaining Muslim stronghold in the south; and building viable fortifications on the eastern frontiers, albeit as much as jumping-off points for attacks on Muslim-held territories to the east as for defence.

The Feudal Landscape: Internal Security and Cultural Benefits

Any map of crusader castles, particularly in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, raises many questions. Most castles, ironically, are not facing the enemy, and are nowhere near a border or frontier, however loosely one defines such a thing. Even more perversely, many of them, particularly in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, were built in times of relative peace.[61]

What are we to make of this? It looks like complete madness. Why would a society with a very limited economic surplus and a necessary obsession with military matters make such apparently irrational decisions? The obvious answer, and the one that makes most sense if one approaches the crusades from an ideological perspective, is that they needed them. All the time, across all their lands. The crusaders were, so the argument might run, a tiny group of invaders, loathed by the locals, trapped in their fortifications, and emerging only to brutalise their subjects.

But almost none of this is true. As we have seen, the Franks were much more integrated into the region than we usually appreciate, and enjoyed good relations with local Christian communities who were, in

any case, often the majority of the population. There were no uprisings from the local Muslim communities, who carried on tilling the fields for their foreign Frankish masters in much the same way as they had done for their former overlords, the foreign Egyptians or the equally foreign but more recent Turkic arrivals.

The real reasons for castle-building in the interior, and the distribution patterns this building took, are quite different, and in some ways are entirely opposite to those one might expect. The reasons seem to be broadly fourfold: the 'high water mark' effect of military threat; the continued level of underlying violence and instability; the economic infrastructure; and the cultural benefits.

Taking the southern part of the lordship of Caesarea as an example, we will look at each of these reasons in turn, and try to establish how castles in the crusader states could end up being distributed in such a counterintuitive way. If you were looking to raise a family in the Latin East, this area would, ostensibly at least, feature highly on your list of the safest and most attractive places to live. And yet, in this relatively small area, miles away from enemy forces, we find no less than six crusader castles (possibly even seven) all dating back to the earliest years of the crusader states. How do we explain this?[62]

The answer lies partly in the permanence of stone, and partly in the perception of military threat. Once a castle exists, with all the investment of manpower and resources that its construction represents, it does not just disappear when the military threat diminishes. The garrison might be greatly reduced, or removed altogether, and the uses to which the castle are put may change (it may be used to store agricultural produce, for instance, or become an administrative centre), but the structure will, more or less, stay in place. So the archaeological remains we find are likely to represent the 'high water mark' of military threat, rather than a fixed response to a constant level of insecurity.

There is also the issue of perception tinged by hindsight. We think of Caesarea as a 'safe' area, because we know that the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem would not be overrun again by Muslim armies until 1187, as a consequence of the catastrophic defeat at Hattin. To someone living in the area in, say, 1140 or 1150, however, the situation was never so clear. The Egyptian military still had a significant toehold in the south and the volatile Muslim states to the east could pose a greater or lesser threat within a very short space of time. A prudent person in Palestine, at almost any time and in any location in the twelfth century, could be forgiven for enjoying times of peace but preparing for war.

The 'castles' built around Caesarea were very simple, often little

more than basic towers with a walled enclosure. But they had real value in case of a short-term emergency. As their strategic importance diminished, this first generation of 'castles of the interior' came to appear anomalous and out of place. In fact, however, they had a precise military functionality at the time of their construction and their utility morphed, as we shall see, to encompass other social and economic requirements.

Another reason for building fortifications in areas of supposed security lies in our perception of violence or, just as importantly, the threat of violence. It is usually possible to identify periods of high-intensity threat. Armies invade. Battles take place. Towns are overrun and sacked. Importantly, for our purposes, chroniclers mention these things and let us know some of the details. War is the high-profile end of the spectrum of violence.

But as well as these relatively short bursts of intense insecurity, there were also much more extended periods of lower-level violence, with all the endemic issues that brings with it. The possibility of violence was constant. Threats from bandits, small opportunistic raids and nomadic incursions were not dramatic enough to attract the attention of chroniclers, except under exceptional circumstances, but were ingrained in the fabric of rural life.[63]

On the rare occasions when we have an insight into the everyday experience of travellers or rural communities in this period, the threat of violence is so ingrained that it is almost taken for granted. In the fragmentary Muslim village tales that have survived from the area around Nablus, we find an almost continual awareness of violence, and references to Frankish bandits preying on the local communities, which are all the more striking because, as far as we know, there were very few Franks living nearby. Travelling on a road from one town to another was always a high-risk activity, even for armed groups.[64]

In this context, the presence of small castles and towers begins to make a lot more sense. Unfortified villages, with unarmed occupants, were extremely vulnerable even to small groups of bandits or raiders. In a region which had experienced lengthy periods of instability, keeping the remaining peasantry feeling comfortable enough to continue working in the fields was always a high priority. So the fairly basic rural fortifications of the early period of crusader rule continued to have a vital use. They did not require a lot of upgrading or huge garrisons, but rather were geared to provide short-term sanctuary for the local communities when required.

Using the example of Caesarea again, the process of gradually transforming small castles and fortifications into centres for rural regeneration can be seen across the whole lordship. This started informally, as fighting died down and the land became more settled,

but it also received formal stimulus as more of the local knights sold rights over various villages to religious institutions. These kinds of arrangements worked well on many different levels. For the knights, it gave them money to support themselves and their followers as they spent the majority of their time on military matters, campaigning with the king, often hundreds of kilometres away in the north, or performing other military duties.[65]

There were approximately one hundred villages in the lordship of Caesarea. By the 1180s, all of the rural fortifications in the lordship where we can identify ownership were in the hands of the military orders or other monastic institutions. The secular knights and the lords of Caesarea were able to focus more on campaigning. The monks were able to focus on rural settlement, agricultural productivity and the establishment of a more substantial Christian population. The role of the castles of the interior changed as the level of threat diminished, but their usefulness never entirely disappeared.[66]

Finally, there are also more subjective issues. Emotions are hard to prove and even harder to analyse, particularly over such distances of time, but it is impossible to understand behaviour without at least trying to do so. There is, for example, a crass answer to the question 'why did King Fulk build so many castles?' and that is to say 'because he liked building castles'. This sounds absurd on one level, but is not entirely so. King Fulk came to the Latin East from his lands in Anjou, and it was no coincidence that the stone donjon pattern, the great central towers which we see so often in early crusader castles, originated in that county. Before he travelled east, Fulk had built similar castles at home, including the keep at Montrichard. He built castles himself, and he came from a society that was habituated to building them. Given the right conditions, Fulk's response was to build a castle.[67]

As we have seen, castles did not merely have a military function. Their use extended to security and policing, the application of justice, the regeneration of rural areas, as centres for new settlement or for administration. All of which is very logical. But going beyond logic, it is also clear that building and maintaining castles brought significant emotional and cultural benefits. By the twelfth century, it was not just Fulk and his relatives in Anjou who liked to build castles: it was what the whole Frankish cultural elite of the period did.

They were expensive to build, and often cripplingly expensive to maintain. They could become a liability. But they also represented status, power and prestige. The seals of the lords of Caesarea, used to authenticate the documents they issued, have two images on them. On one side we see a knight on a warhorse, armoured, carrying a lance: powerful and effective, the message it is trying to convey is clearly

one of authority and military strength. On the other side, used consistently across almost two centuries, is an image of the walls of Caesarea and their impressive gates, flanked by two commanding towers. The two images go easily alongside each other: as symbols of the ruling elite they were naturally complementary, stressing legitimacy and power, status and wealth.

The smaller castles in settled areas tended to pass out of secular hands as the century progressed and as the military focus turned elsewhere. But there was an abiding attraction. The richer lords kept their main castles for as long as possible, and possession of them was important to their status. To a large extent, castle-building was what they did, and for a certain class, castles were the most powerful symbol of what they were. There was a small fort in the lordship of Caesarea called Castellare Rogerii Longobardi, presumably built by an Italian knight settling down after the First Crusade or the Genoese expedition of 1101.[68] Did Roger the Lombard like having a castle? Did he enjoy the status, and the 'legacy', of having that castle named after him? Absolutely. With something as substantial as that on the ground, whether you came from Anjou or Lombardy, once you had a castle, you knew you had arrived.

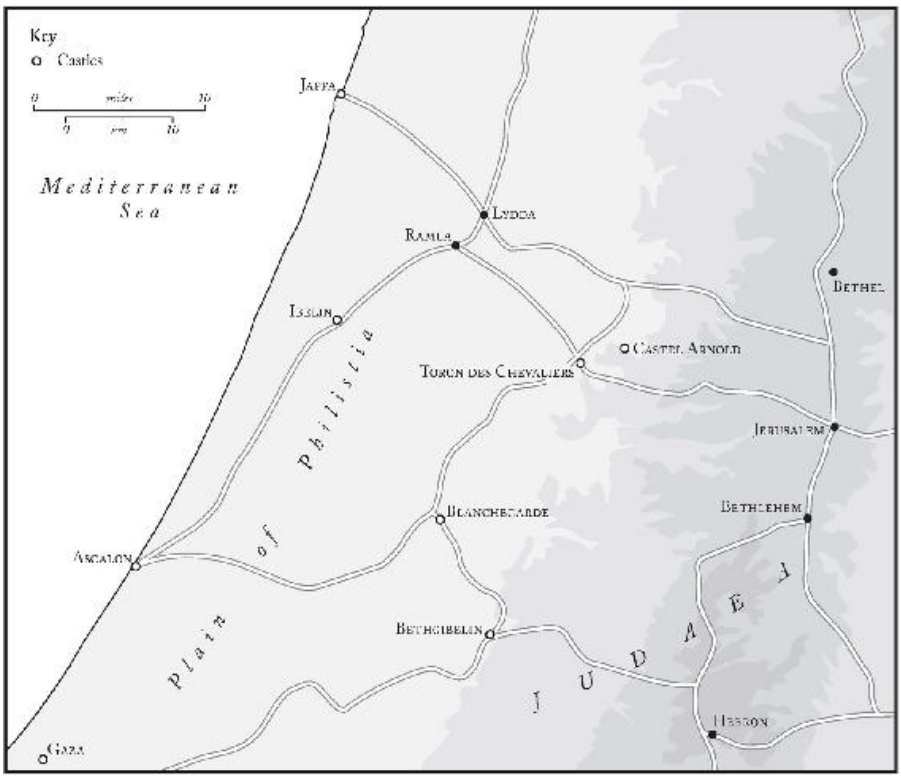
Coping with Ascalon: Passive-Aggressive Castle-Building

Ascalon, the last remaining Fatimid toehold on the coast, had a substantial garrison, so the first attempts at establishing fortifications around it were aimed at containment rather than intimidation. As we have seen, Castel Arnold was one of the earliest crusader fortifications, and the first, relatively primitive, fort had been captured and destroyed by Fatimid forces in the autumn of 1106.[69] It was probably repaired soon afterwards, but its position was so attractive that it was completely rebuilt and extended in the winter of 1132–3.[70]

King Fulk was not present when Castel Arnold was built, as he and the field army were campaigning in the north. Significantly, the castle was built by the patriarch of Jerusalem, William of Messines, and its main purpose was the control and safety of the roads, rather than any explicit desire to apply pressure on Ascalon. In fact, it was too far away from Ascalon to present a threat in any meaningful way. But it succeeded well in its main function: improving security and communications between Jerusalem and the coast. The market provided the surest indicator of success: once the castle was in place, food prices in Jerusalem fell significantly, as security on the road improved.[71]

Its success led to a more comprehensive strategy to contain Ascalon. Although large-scale invasions by the Fatimid military had stopped, the Egyptians remained a constant threat, albeit at a lower

level. The Egyptian military sent their garrison ‘every three months new people and fresh legions, together with provisions and supplies of arms. The new arrivals naturally wished to try their strength and to give proofs of their courage. Hence, against the wishes of the veterans, they often made experimental sallies and expeditions. The Christians perceived that the bold incursions of the enemy showed no signs of ceasing.’[72]



Map 6 Isolating Ascalon
Source: After Pringle Sec., pp. 148–9.

Major invasions by the Egyptians took time to prepare, and were thus usually expected. They were met by forces mustered from across the kingdom, which also took time to put in place. The new Fatimid approach, that of pin-prick raids to disrupt the Frankish colonies, was debilitating rather than catastrophic, but it was far harder to prevent. It called for local resources, rather than a full muster, and for a fast response.

The Frankish solution to this threat constituted a clear statement of strategic intent: they would build a ring of castles closer to Ascalon than the previous fortifications, allowing local forces to intercept Fatimid troops before they penetrated too far into the kingdom and

particularly before they could get to the main roads linking Jerusalem to the coast. The intention was also that these castles would allow the Franks to become more aggressive in their approach to Ascalon, and that the fortresses would 'serve as bases from which to make frequent attacks upon the city itself'.[73]

Geography was obviously a critical point in all this, but so too was the proximity of readily available, and ideally prefabricated building materials. In the case of the castle at Bethgibelin this was the old Byzantine city of Eleutheropolis and the stones around it, which made the initial task of building the walls much easier and quicker. The building of Bethgibelin in 1134, like the other castles around Ascalon that came after it, was very much a communal affair: a cross between a team-building exercise and an American barn-raising. The summons went out and all 'the people of the vicinity were called together, the patriarch William and the nobles also came . . . For twelve miles from Ascalon they built a strong fortress surrounded by an impregnable wall with towers, ramparts and a moat.'[74]

Bethgibelin eventually became what is known as a concentric castle (i.e. a very substantial structure, with two sets of walls to provide an additional layer of defence); when it was first built, however, it was a much simpler affair, with the extra fortifications only being added later in the century, as the security situation deteriorated.

Bethgibelin was initially built by the king and the people, but the new owners who were given the castle when it was finally completed in 1136, marked a significant departure in terms of the defence of the kingdom, as 'it was granted by common consent to the brothers of the house of the Hospital, which is at Jerusalem'. The garrison was soon involved in aggressive patrolling, intercepting troop movements outside of Ascalon and taking prisoners. The operating costs of the castle were partly defrayed by the ransom demands made for the release of prisoners.[75]

With Bethgibelin operating effectively, the next step was to build a castle at Ibelin, a strategic point close to the perennial battle ground of choice for the Egyptian army. Once again, the whole community was actively involved and we have a sense of voluntary labour, as well as a shared sense of common purpose.[76] The castle was of the simple and effective 'castrum' type: that is, a small castle with four walls surrounding a square courtyard, and a tower at each corner.[77]

The role of the castles was clearly seen as being increasingly aggressive rather than defensive, and to complete the network of fortifications to the north and north-east of Ascalon, Blanchegarde castle was built in 1142. Once again, ordinary people seem to have been glad to help, providing labour and assistance for the more

specialist artisans. As almost everyone, from local settlers to native Christians, and even townsfolk in Jerusalem, stood to gain from the increased security which these structures brought with them, it is not hard to see why they were so popular.[78]

The design was by this time becoming fairly formulaic: another 'castrum' type of construction was chosen, a simple walled courtyard with ancillary buildings lining the interior of the walls or free standing in the courtyard. Visibility was particularly important, as it had 'four towers of suitable height. From the top of this there was an unobstructed view as far as the enemy's city'.[79] The castle was kept by the king, so he retained direct control of at least one part of the security network around Ascalon.[80] The garrison seems to have been particularly aggressive and the castle's excellent field of vision across the Judaean foothills made it a good lookout post, and a vital observation point for coordinating activity with the other nearby castles. William of Tyre wrote that:

> often by themselves, more often in company with men at arms from the other fortresses built with similar intent, [the garrison of Blanchegarde] used to issue forth to encounter and defeat the enemy when they tried to make raids from the city. Occasionally, they even attacked the men of Ascalon on their own initiative, wrought great havoc upon them and frequently triumphed over them.[81]

Like the other new castles, Blanchegarde became the centre of a major Frankish colony, with a town growing up around it, and with its local villages becoming far more prosperous and populous. The immediate environs of the castle developed into a Frankish township, with its own court, and settled communities in the surrounding villages began to thrive under its protection.[82] Similiarly, we know that by 1160 there were at least thirty-two Frankish families at Bethgibelin, with a local court and, importantly, with military obligations. Every castle not only had its own garrison, but also strengthened the local militia.[83]

It is fascinating to see such centrally organised castle-building and colonisation taking place. It is certainly a rare example of explicit strategic intent in a medieval society. From the very beginning, contemporary commentators suggested that this was a coordinated military programme, extended over a period of years, designed to intimidate and neutralise the Egyptian military operating out of Ascalon. On a localised level at least, the central planning and objectives are ostensibly clear.

From a broader perspective, however, the strategy behind the programme is less obvious. There had been no serious Egyptian incursions since 1123. In fact, the vast majority of the Fatimid army's interventions in Palestine had ended by 1105. When the threat was at

its highest, there was no castle-building nearby. Now, when the serious threat was all but a memory, why devote so much energy to surrounding it with fortifications? Why wait so long? Or, indeed, why do it at all?

Ironically, the explanation for the strategy of the south can be found in the strategy of the north. Fulk needed to neutralise the Egyptians while he and his army focused their attention elsewhere. He was not everyone's choice of ruler, and he held the throne of Jerusalem only through his marriage to Queen Melisende. During much of the decade of intense castle-building around Ascalon (broadly 1132–42), Fulk was preoccupied in trying to keep the northern crusader states in line. His sister-in-law, Princess Alice, spent most of the period 1130–6 trying to take control of the Principality of Antioch in the most divisive fashion, and launched no fewer than three attempted coups, in the course of which she incited some of Fulk's leading vassals to revolt and, possibly, entered into secret alliances with the main Muslim enemies of the crusader states. Pons, the count of Tripoli, went into open revolt with her, an uprising that was only put down with significant bloodshed when Fulk marched north to meet him in battle at Rugia.[84]

Even more importantly, the resurgence of Muslim power under Zengi meant that the northern frontiers were in danger of collapse and, for much of the 1130s until his death in 1143, Fulk was on campaign in Tripoli, Antioch or Edessa. However destructive the Egyptian army might be in its raids around Ascalon, the king was a man who always had something more important on his mind. He knew that the critical decisions of the day would be played out in the north rather than the south.

The fundamental protocols of Frankish defence were the linked principles that the king of Jerusalem held an informal seniority among the crusader states, a seniority that carried responsibilities as well as privileges, and that, in the event of invasion, each state could rely on swift help from the others. If King Fulk was to uphold these basic principles, he and the royal army needed to be free to be able to campaign in the north, with depressing regularity, to protect the status quo and to help defend the often ungrateful and unruly northern Franks. The strategic decision to 'screen' the Egyptians and their base at Ascalon was a natural consequence of the fundamental protocols. The crusader states never had the manpower to launch more than one major military initiative at a time. Screening the Fatimids, so that he could focus on Zengi and recalcitrant vassals and relatives in the north was not ideal, but it was the least bad option.

Although the castle-building programme of 1132–42 is sometimes seen as an active anti-Egyptian strategy, it was in fact a way of using

the local population to best effect, as they gathered to build the castles, and provided a militia to supplement the new garrisons. This freed up the Frankish field army for the more important tasks that they needed to undertake in the north. In reality, the castle-building programme around Ascalon is better understood as an anti-Zengid, rather than an anti-Fatimid, strategy.

The crusader states were relatively simple societies. Staff colleges were unheard of. Yet in the activities to blockade and intimidate Ascalon, we see a clear and sustained strategic programme, brought to a successful conclusion over a period of years. And, of course, why should that not be the case? These were resourceful men, perhaps not professionally educated in a modern military sense, but undoubtedly dedicated to warfare. In the Latin East, where a single failure could have huge consequences, minds tended to be focused.

The Eastern Front

From a distance, the castle-building around Ascalon looks impressive: a medieval 'ring of steel' to keep the enemies of the crusader states at bay. But it was much less than that. The Fatimid state was already broken, with armies that were increasingly focused on civil wars or politicking in Egypt. The Fatimid army in Ascalon might be more or less comfortably contained by a series of fortifications and local militia, but dealing with Turkic armies was always a very different, and far more challenging proposition.

The shockwaves of military, demographic and political pressure were inevitably felt most harshly on the north-eastern marches of the crusader states, closest to the point of entry for Turkic tribes into the region, and to the political centres from which Zengi, and latterly his son Nur al-Din were imposing greater unity upon their generally unwilling neighbours.

Frankish expansionism ground to a halt in the face of increasing Muslim opposition, and zones of influence began to harden into grudgingly acknowledged frontiers. All along these frontiers a second generation of crusader castles was built and, over time, upgraded and improved, as pressure increased and as resources allowed. These upgrades were evolutionary rather than revolutionary, however, and, in many of the less well-resourced lordships, the costs involved were onerous to the point of unsustainability: these were never 'impregnable' fortresses.

Banyas, a fortified town with a large citadel-tower strategically located on the road from Tyre to Damascus, is a good example of the pressure these 'phase two' frontier castles were under. On 11 December 1132, the Damascene 'askar, together with specialist sappers, 'approached the wall with vaulted shields [i.e. mobile

protective mantlets], accompanied by Khurasanian [miners] and wall breakers'. The overwhelming suppressive fire of the Turkic archers was enough to keep the small Frankish garrison pinned down behind the battlements. The fortifications of Banyas, perhaps adequate in the first decades of the century, were no longer fit for purpose: they were outmatched by the larger armies and specialist troops now being fielded. Muslim troops managed to destroy part of the walls and 'they rushed through the breach and entered the town in ever increasing numbers. The Franks who were in the town took refuge in the citadel and the bastions, where they defended themselves and resisted all assaults.' The defenders in the main citadel eventually surrendered on condition that quarter was granted.[85]

The fall of Banyas before help could arrive was a shocking indictment of how vulnerable fortifications of this vintage could be. The news 'spread amongst the Franks and filled them with awe and alarm that such a thing should have happened . . . they were greatly astonished that Banyas should have been taken with such ease and in so short a time'.[86]

By 1140, it was in the hands of Zengi, who was determined to add Damascus to his ever growing collection of Syrian city states. Tellingly, the inhabitants of Damascus were far more afraid of Zengi than they were of the Franks and they agreed to hand over Banyas, if it could be recaptured, to Baldwin III.[87] The siege of Banyas was undertaken jointly by the armies of Damascus and the Frankish armies of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, Antioch and Tripoli. Even at the time this seemed extraordinary, and William of Tyre was moved to comment how strange it was to see 'a hostile people encouraging an enemy to the fiercest warfare and, as an ally, actually in arms for the destruction of a common foe'.[88]

This bizarre siege was helped by the fact that the governor of Banyas had recently been killed while on a raid down to Tyre, accompanied by much of the garrison, so the defenders were depleted and suffering from leadership problems when the Franco-Damascene army arrived. The siege lasted for nearly a month, but the construction of a large siege tower, combined with the continued reluctance of Zengi to take on the besieging armies, eventually brought the defenders to the negotiating table. The garrison was short of supplies and the discomfort of surrender was ameliorated by the offer of a generous pension for the garrison commander, and good terms for those who wished to stay. On 12 June 1140 the siege ended and the town was immediately handed over to the Franks, as agreed.[89]

By the 1150s, however, the cost of gradual improvements to castles such as Banyas, together with the expense associated with providing them with sufficient garrisons, had become absolutely

crippling for the lay nobility. Humphrey of Toron, lord of Banyas, was a seasoned military figure and one of the kingdom's richest magnates. But even he 'became weary of the continual responsibility and expense which devolved upon him in the care of the city of Banyas, his hereditary possession. Since he could not without aid suitably rule and protect it, with the king's consent he decided to share it equally with the brothers of the Hospital.'[90] The chronicler was expressing it politely, but his readers knew exactly what he was saying. Even a magnate of Humphrey's status was being forced to go to the Hospitallers, cap in hand, to ask for their help.

The Hospitallers agreed to take on some of that 'responsibility and expense', together with half of the city and its outlying lands to generate money to defray at least part of their costs. The order arranged for a resupply convoy to be put together, but they realised they might have to fight their way through Muslim troops to get there, and gathered a small army to accompany it. In the event, even that level of security was insufficient. On 26 April 1157, when the convoy was close to Banyas itself, Nur al-Din's Turkic mercenaries launched a massive attack. The entire column was routed. The cavalry seem to have been able to fight their way through to Banyas but the infantry were either killed, or taken captive. The prisoners were paraded through Damascus in chains. Some were sent to Nur al-Din at Baalbek, who had them publicly executed in celebration.[91]

Nur al-Din immediately exploited this setback by putting Banyas under a serious siege, accompanied by several siege engines. The usual hail of arrows was used to sweep the battlements clear of defenders and Muslim sappers quickly undermined part of the wall and adjacent tower.[92] Once the tower had collapsed, they 'forced their way in through the gap, [and] plied the sword in killing its inhabitants and plundering its contents'. The siege of the citadel was only called off when news arrived of King Baldwin's approach, but Nur al-Din took the opportunity to destroy the town before he withdrew, and his men 'undermined and set fire to the city which he had taken by assault'.[93]

The devastation of the town had been carried out as efficiently as time allowed before Nur al-Din's army departed. Baldwin was forced to spend much time and money restoring it, as he had 'promised that he would remain until the fallen places had been raised, the breaches mended, and the city, its walls repaired, restored to its former state'. The cost of these repairs was substantial. Baldwin disbanded his army too quickly, probably out of a desire to save money and bring the expense of the expedition to a close, but his depleted force was taken by surprise and badly cut up by Muslim forces while on patrol nearby only a few weeks later, on 19 June.[94]

This defeat, coming so soon after the destruction of the town,

showed the financial stress that the secular authorities were struggling to come to terms with. The Hospitallers realised that they had taken on more than they anticipated and tried to renege on the deal. They were eventually persuaded to honour their original agreement, however, and a royal charter was issued a few months later, confirming their responsibilities. However much they might have tried to avoid it, it was clear that there was now no alternative. Even the greatest of the nobility could no longer afford to maintain frontier castles in the kingdom's new hotspots, areas where the unifying Muslim powers could bring large bodies of nomadic tribesmen to bear on the sedentary communities of Palestine. The monarchy, with their wide-ranging responsibilities, were little better placed. The defence of the frontiers could now only be achieved by ramping up the involvement of the military orders.[95]

The end for Banyas came soon after. In 1164 the army of the Latin kingdom was absent, fighting in Egypt. With the garrisons of the frontier castles stripped back to help form that army, Banyas was looking more vulnerable than ever. Humphrey was absent on campaign, as was the town's bishop. The garrison had been massively reduced and it appears that the civilian Frankish population was also diminished, presumably because it had proved difficult to persuade new settlers to fully reoccupy the town in the aftermath of Nur al-Din's massacre in 1157. Attempts to revitalise it had also not been helped by the incessant Muslim raiding around the region, and many of the few Frankish soldiers that remained were drawn south by a Muslim feint towards the important city of Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, exacerbating the already acute manpower shortage.[96] When Nur al-Din's army arrived, they 'found it undefended . . . and the population had also been greatly diminished by slaughter'.[97]

The siege itself was neither lengthy nor particularly ferocious. It did not need to be. Faced with overwhelming enemy forces, an inadequate garrison and no realistic prospect of relief, the temporary Christian commanders felt that the best course of action was to negotiate safe passage out for themselves and the civilian population. As William of Tyre wrote, the 'people within were forced to surrender, on condition that they should be permitted to leave the city unmolested with all their goods'.[98] On 18 October 1164, Banyas fell back into Muslim hands, never to be recovered.

The commanders of Banyas were accused of treachery, probably unfairly, but the debate about 'treachery' or even about leadership qualities was ultimately a misleading one: a form of displacement activity that allowed contemporaries to avoid facing up to the full implications of their strategic position. To retain any political clout or flexibility, the crusaders needed to gather as many men as possible to

create a field army. While this Frankish army was on campaign, there were always sufficient nomadic tribesmen entering the region from the north to ensure that Muslim armies could operate elsewhere with relative impunity.[99]

Castle design and functionality gradually improved to meet this threat. Extra walls were added. The towers along those walls became bigger, stronger and more numerous. Posterns, concealed doors to allow raiding parties or messengers to leave the castle, were incorporated so that sorties could be made in strength and from concealment. But as the frontiers became more fixed and more dangerous, so these 'phase two' frontier castles visibly struggled to try to keep up.

Phase Three: The Age of the Military Orders, 1170–87

By the late 1160s it was clear that incremental progress in castle design was altogether insufficient. Frankish commanders could no longer avoid the issue of whether existing castles, and particularly frontier castles, were fit for purpose. We find no more talk of treachery on the part of Frankish garrisons. The crusader states realised that they were facing systemic and strategic issues rather than merely tactical problems of motivation or treachery. If morale was low among garrisons, this was a symptom of the underlying problems, not a cause.

The Frankish response was to strengthen the frontiers by increasing the scale and effectiveness of critical fortifications. This level of commitment was way beyond the means of the local barons, and was generally even beyond the resources of the king himself. With the exception of one or two of the greatest lords, such as the indefatigable Reynald of Châtillon, the age of the grand castle and the active defence of the frontiers moved out of the hands of the secular nobility, and into the control of the military orders. Contemporaries referred to the warrior monks as 'the new knighthood', and perhaps their most vital military contribution was to preside over the creation of 'the new castle'.[100]

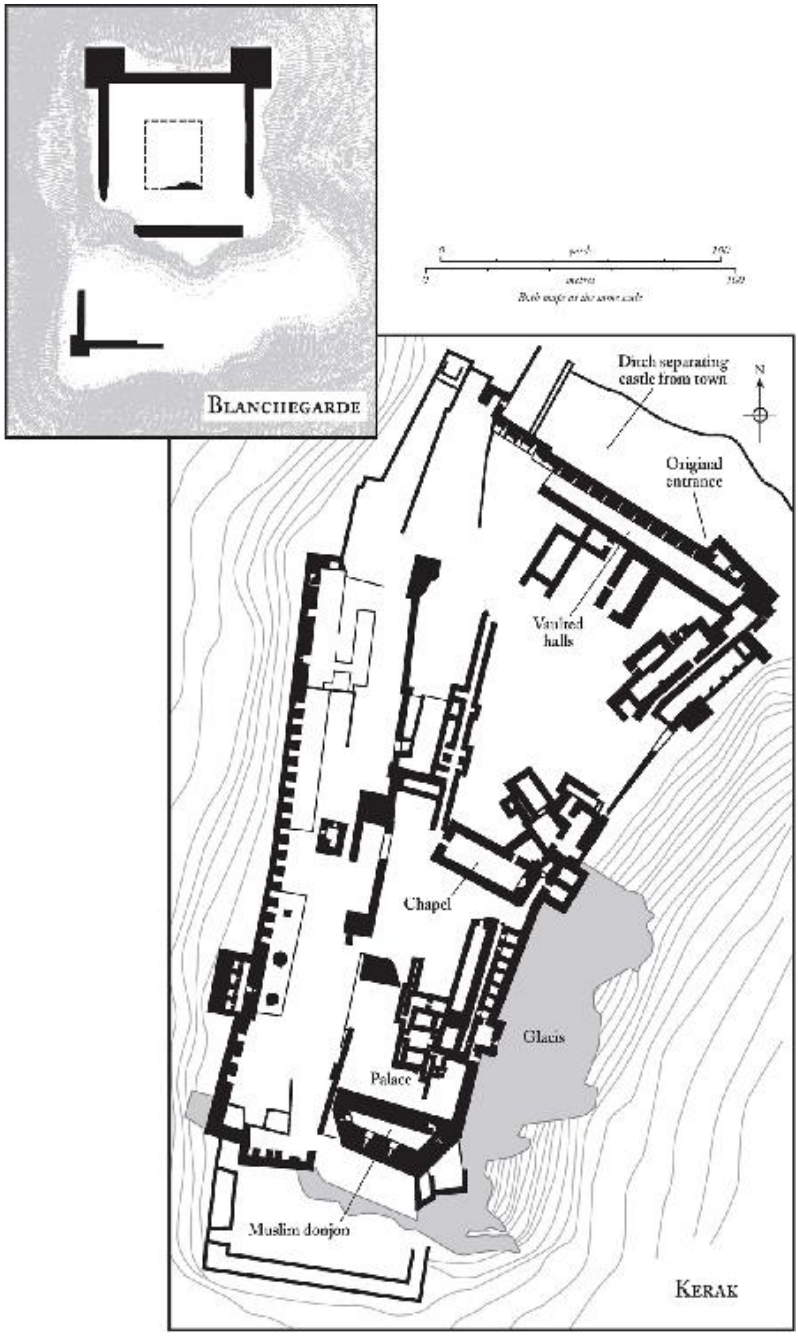
One should never pretend that the newly built or upgraded castles of the 1170s and 1180s were 'typical', any more than a modern aircraft carrier is the 'average' vessel in the fleet. And they were certainly not the product of some rigidly enforced proto-communist 'five-year plan'. In many cases, as one would expect, the incorporation of newer features was an evolutionary process. But they were disproportionately important, and much of the military activity in the region was focused upon them.

Some of their features were not entirely novel. They were 'concentric' (so-called because they had two or more sets of walls) but

the multi-layered late Roman walls of Constantinople were familiar to all the leaders of the First Crusade, and there were other examples of Byzantine fortifications in the region which incorporated multiple lines of defence. It is probably no coincidence that the early Tripolitan castle of Mount Pilgrim, which incorporated some of these features, was built with the aid of Byzantine engineers, who presumably influenced its design. The crusader castles of the 1170s onwards, however, took these principles to their logical conclusion and moved castle design onto an altogether different level.[101]

What did these 'new castles' look like, and how did they function differently? Well, the first thing one would have noticed was that they were bigger. Much bigger. This shift towards greater size was not a gradual, evolutionary response. The change was extraordinary. The hilltop castle of Castellum Regis was first mentioned in 1160 but it has far more in common with the earlier castles of the kingdom, such as Mirabel.[102]

The design of the new castles created a system of defence in depth that was far more subtle than just an extra layer of walls. In front of them were wide and deep moats.[103] These had always had a role to play in the military architecture of the region, but with the heightened pressures of the 1160s onwards, ditches rapidly became deeper and wider, creating absolutely massive obstacles. Contemporary sources claim that the moat at Safad was 13.5m wide and 15.5m deep. Current archaeology has only found moats up to 7m deep but even so these would have posed very significant problems to an attacker.[104] The effect would have been to channel attacks, forcing assault teams and miners into pre-set fields of fire, and making it much more difficult for siege engines such as battering rams or large mantlets to be positioned against the walls. The diagonal shape of the ditches at the foot of the wall also gave much better visibility, and a better field of fire, for the garrison's archers.



Plan 4 Blanchegarde and Kerak: Comparative Plans on a Constant Scale
Source: After Pringle Sec., pp. 59 and 93, Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 183 and 185, and Kennedy 1994, p. 47.

The main benefit from a Frankish perspective, however, was to make the job of enemy miners far more difficult. Massive ditches, ideally taken down to bedrock level, made it far harder to conduct

such operations and, even where they were still possible, they made the whole process of undermining the walls slower and costlier.

One other very objective and unemotional way of looking at the transformation of crusader castles is to track how the width of their curtain walls (that is, the walls enclosing the courtyard of a castle) changed over time. In particular, we find a significant increase in the size of the walls constructed at the end of the 1160s, when the 'phase two' castles were definitively found to be wanting.[105]

In the first half of the century, walls required only a depth of around 2m to be effective. That had been the typical width of eleventh-century Muslim fortifications, and it was a standard that the early crusaders similarly felt to be adequate. At Bethgibelin, for instance, originally built in 1136, the curtain walls were 2.1m thick. At Kerak, built around 1142, the curtain walls were, at 2.5m, slightly more substantial, but still of the same magnitude.[106]

From the late 1160s onwards, however, there was a quantum shift. When Bethgibelin was expanded in 1168, the width of the walls was doubled, to 4.2m. Belvoir, almost totally rebuilt by the Hospitallers at the same time, similarly had curtain walls some 4m thick. This was not a coincidence. The unfinished Templar castle at Jacob's Ford shows exactly the same trend, with curtain walls some 4.3m wide. Likewise, the excavated section of walls at Belmont suggests that they were approximately 5m wide.[107] Once again, at a very basic level, having thicker walls, and using bigger, thicker stones in their construction, made them far more resistant to enemy artillery but also, more importantly, made them less vulnerable to opportunistic mining operations.

The walls were not just thicker, but higher too.[108] Higher walls may seem an obvious advantage. Primarily, of course, they give the defenders the advantage of height, expressed through a greater potential velocity for missiles launched on those below, greater visibility, and so on. But the benefits are even more far-reaching. As the century progressed, Muslim expertise in the use of siege artillery grew. The bigger, more professionalised Turkic-Syrian armies of the 1160s onwards were able to make significant improvements in terms of both the quantity and quality of the siege artillery they were able to deploy. One of the subtler advantages of a higher wall is that it creates a 'dead zone', both behind it and (less usefully) in front of it. Thus, because of the parabolic trajectory of the simple siege artillery of the period, defending troops could form up in relative safety within the 'shadow' of a castle's walls: the higher the walls, the bigger the protected zone inside, and the greater the protection given to interior buildings and their contents.

As the walls improved, so did their towers. Early castles had

tended to have smaller towers, and even these were often solid (i.e. filled) structures which provided a combat platform only at their highest level. This was certainly the case in pre-crusader Fatimid Egyptian fortifications, such as we find at Cafarlet and Castellum Beroart, and in early phases of building at the Frankish castles of Castel Arnold and Bethgibelin. These towers were fit for purpose at the time, but their size and solidity imposed limits on their usefulness as the century progressed.[109]

Later towers, and particularly towers in the 'phase three' fortifications, tended to be hollow, allowing access to concealed posterns, but also began to make possible the development of combat platforms at different levels in the tower. Major towers increasingly began to have a 'stand-alone' military capacity. They were taller and they were bigger, creating a more substantial firing platform on their battlements. They jutted out in front of the defences, creating flanking fields of fire and keeping attackers away from the base of the walls. The main fighting platform was still on the top level, but the potential of the tower was being extended to give it greater flexibility.[110]

Posterns were also improved. Castles of an earlier generation were of a much simpler design and tended to offer only very basic, and very dangerous, arrangements for sorties.[111] Often this consisted of opening one of the main gates, running out quickly and hoping to catch the enemy unawares. Not surprisingly, this was never very satisfactory, particularly when the number of gates was limited, and incurred severe risks if the sortie party retreated and were pursued too closely by the enemy. At this point, the main gates themselves could be forced and the entire town or castle lost.[112]

This lack was at least partially remedied in the new castles, addressed by increasing both the number of posterns from which sorties could be launched and by improving the levels of concealment around them. This process was helped by the larger and more complex wall systems that were being put in place, and also by the new moats that surrounded them. The Hospitaller castle of Belvoir, for instance, incorporated no fewer than five such postern gates, concealed by the corner towers and allowing the defenders access to the bottom of the moat without being overlooked by the besiegers.[113]

Protected firing points were an additional design feature. The increased ability of the Turkic-Syrian states to attract large numbers of highly effective nomadic archers was reflected in the size and quality of the assault squads that they were able to field. Importantly, this also meant that they were able to employ such a density of archery fire against the battlements that it was difficult for the relatively small garrisons of 'phase two' castles to prevent groups of enemy engineers or miners working at the bottom of the walls.[114] One of the crusader

responses to this threat was to improve the ability of defending archers to operate under cover. They did this by incorporating firing slits, built either in towers or into the walls themselves. Muslim military architecture was more advanced in this respect, reflecting their general superiority with regard to missile weapons, but crusader fortifications still made important improvements to try to catch up.[115]

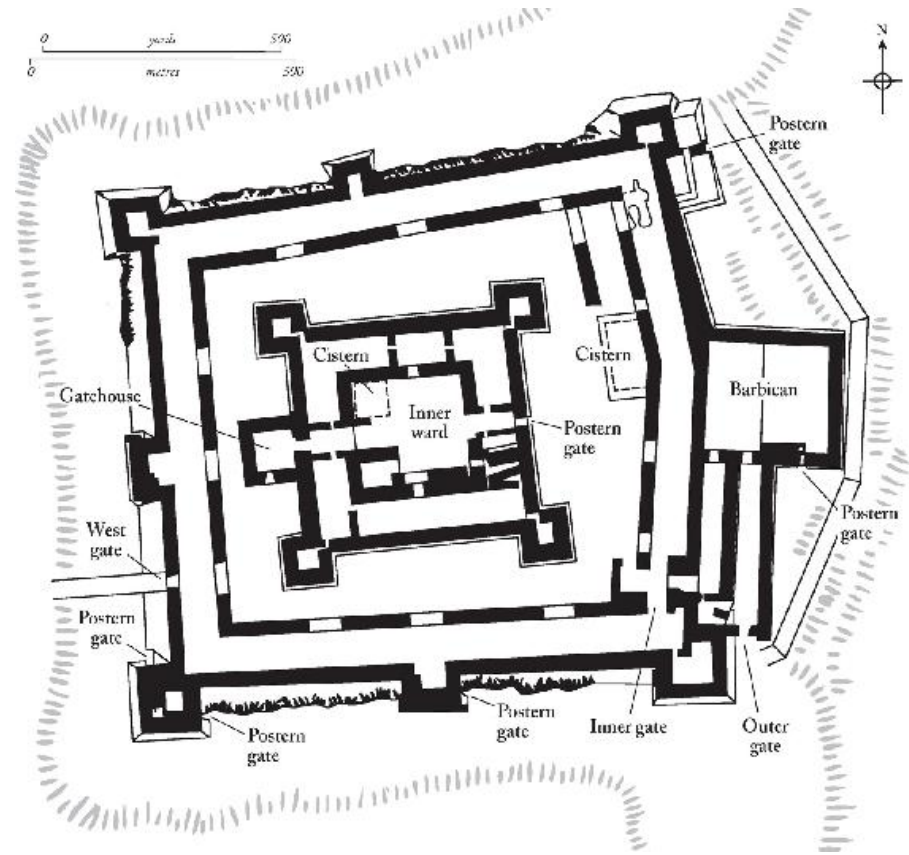
The introduction of different layers of walls to the new generation of castles also allowed large numbers of massive vaults to be built against them. 'Improved vaulting techniques' does not sound like an exciting or battle-winning innovation, but in fact it was a crucial development. As Muslim siege batteries became bigger and heavier, so the ability to protect soldiers, citizens and stores from large enemy projectiles became more and more important.[116]

With the advent of these large, well-protected galleries, generally in the 'shadow' of castle walls, defenders could shelter in safety, close to the action, but well protected. Much the same was true of the enhanced storage capacity which these vaults provided: not glamorous, but significantly enhancing the ability of a 'phase three' castle to hold out in the face of overwhelming odds. It was now feasible to maintain food stocks sufficient for the longest sieges.[117] This, combined with massive new cisterns and more sophisticated methods of water capture, meant that relatively small garrisons could hold out in a strategic position, tying down large numbers of enemy troops for extended periods. The Hospitaller garrison at Belvoir, for instance, living off their supplies and the fruits of a particularly successful sortie against their Muslim besiegers, managed to hold out for eighteen months before surrendering, and the garrison and local Christian militia at Montréal were able to hold out for almost two years.[118]

Finally, once an attacking force got beyond the outer defensive structures and the sheer, dry moats, they were faced with the most visible difference of the new castles: the concentric walls.[119] Like a Russian doll, these lines of walls created a series of citadels within a castle. Each layer, as it opened up, exposed attacking troops to still further casualties just at the point when, in all previous sieges, the adrenaline rush of pillage and killing would kick in. With concentric castles there was no such thrill: the attackers had to start all over again, beginning another siege within a siege.

The effect on the morale of attacking troops must have been considerable. The concentric wall system transformed a single siege into a series of murderous assaults, and provided different, well-prepared fallback positions for the garrison as they withdrew. To besiege a concentric castle meant an acceptance of the medieval equivalent of trench warfare: interminable, dangerous and with no

quick rewards in sight. For Muslim armies, largely composed of mercenaries who were campaigning for booty, the motivational problems were as 'in-depth' as the defences themselves. Not only would morale at the sharp point of an assault suddenly become more problematic, but there were also the difficulties inherent in keeping a non-professional army in the field over increasingly longer periods of time, particularly for an exercise where the balance of risk and reward had shifted dramatically in favour of the defenders.



Plan 5 Belvoir: The Killing Zones of a New Castle
Source: After Pringle Sec., p. 32 and Kennedy 1994, p. 58.

The big frontier castles, the new 'aircraft carriers' of the crusader states, were the most obvious manifestation of this revolution in defensive architecture: but we also see the same process under way in the interior and in smaller fortifications too. The areas that a generation earlier were thought to be so safe that their small castles and towers had become status symbols or administrative depots, now had to upgrade their defensive capabilities in a hurry.

Belmont castle is a good example of this hurried response. Prior to

the late 1160s the site was a largely undefended administrative centre for the surrounding Hospitaller estates. The main structure consisted of a courtyard, with barrel-vaulted chambers along three sides, presumably for storage and other administrative purposes, together with water cisterns and a wine press. There were a couple of small, solid turrets on the courtyard walls, but it was otherwise an unfortified depot.[120] Even in 1169, when the German traveller Theoderic visited the area, he referred to 'Belmont' as the name of an estate or small region rather than as a castle, mentioning it merely as the 'mountain area now called "Belmont"'.[121]

That all changed very quickly. It was converted, at very significant expense, into a concentric castle, which included more sophisticated defensive features such as a talus (a sloping face at the bottom of the wall to make it more difficult to place siege ladders), and an outer gatehouse to the south.[122]

Significantly, this was no isolated or vulnerable frontier location. Belmont is in the mountains due west of Jerusalem, as close to the heart of the Latin Kingdom as it is possible to be. The expense involved was enormous, and could only have been justified by the level of fear and insecurity that had become the norm, even in previously safe areas.

All across the crusader states, on the frontiers and in the rural communities, things were changing. Fortifications had entered into a revolutionary stage of development, and were absorbing a vast proportion of available resources. The scale and geographic scope of these changes meant that they were not 'coincidental', but rather a response to an unavoidable stimulus. But, in the absence of significant technological advances, what exactly was that stimulus?

The Real Drivers of the 'Arms Race'

The real drivers of that change were both simpler and more profound. The forces that caused the crusader castles to increase so dramatically in size and sophistication were the same that propelled Frankish armies into such rapid expansion during the same period: the primal power of demographics and geopolitics.

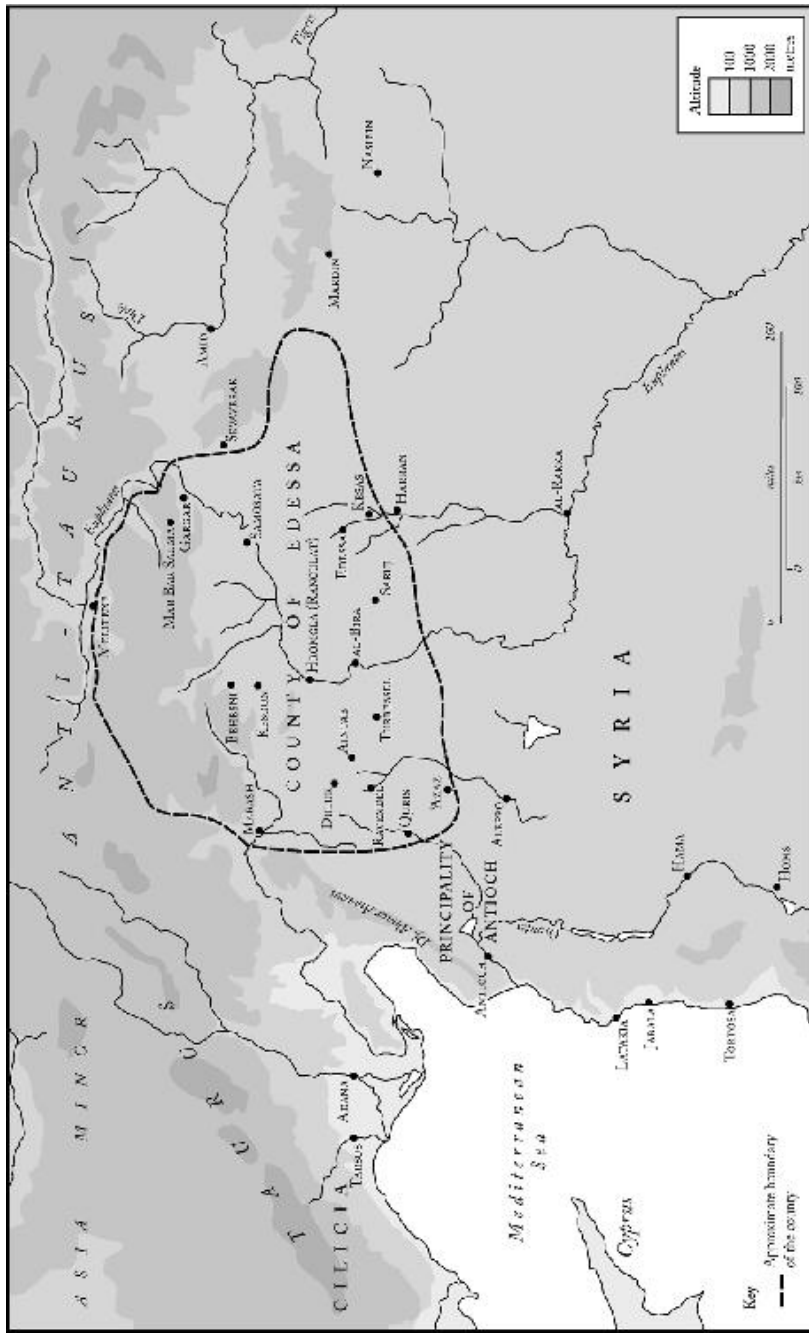
The Collapse of Edessa, 1144–50

The County of Edessa was most vulnerable to the catastrophic impact of that elemental logic. Zengi was the first of the Muslim leaders since the arrival of the crusaders to bring a large part of northern Syria under his control. His family were Turkic mercenaries who had come to prominence in the service of the Seljuk empire. In an age when leaders were expected to act with violence and resolution, Zengi was

singled out by the Muslim chronicles for his spectacular and imaginative cruelty.[123] His upbringing was unusually full of bloodshed, even by the abysmally low standards of the time. His father had killed his wife with a dagger (she was possibly Zengi's mother but probably not) but was excused on the grounds that 'he was not deliberately aiming at her'.[124]

A lack of social skills did not stop Zengi being an effective and feared military leader, however, and, on the contrary, made him ideally suited to lead the volatile nomadic tribesmen entering his domains from the steppes. He and a large Turkic army arrived outside the heavily fortified city of Edessa at the end of November 1144. As always with the crusader states, lack of manpower was an issue. The city was Christian (Armenians and Jacobite Syrians as well as a small number of Franks) but it was acutely undermanned.[125] The only defenders were a few poorly paid and under-motivated mercenaries and civilians who were 'utterly ignorant of the use of arms and familiar only with the business of trading'.[126] For all practical purposes, 'Zengi found that the city was without defenders.'[127]

Edessa was very well fortified, 'surrounded by a massive wall and protected by lofty towers in the upper part of the city. There was another stronghold lower down, to which, even if the city should be taken, their citizens could flee for refuge'.[128] But the scale of the fortifications, however impressive, could not stop the besiegers indefinitely. In the absence of any substantial body of defenders, and with the local Franks unable to muster a sufficient relief force, it was only a matter of time before the city fell. On Saturday, 14 December 1144, the town walls were undermined and collapsed.[129] Muslim troops broke in and a massacre ensued. Once order was restored, the surviving Armenians and other native Christians were permitted to return to their homes but the captive Franks were all executed. On 23 December, after a siege of twenty-eight days, the citadel too surrendered and Edessa was in Zengi's hands.



Map 7 The County of Edessa
Source: After Barber 2012, p. 80.

The capture of Edessa allowed Zengi to take all the other Frankish fortifications east of the Euphrates, with the single exception of al-Bira, 'and there was not one place or stronghold by which he passed

and before which he encamped but was immediately delivered up to him'.[130] In a manner which presaged the collapse of the southern Frankish hinterlands in the aftermath of Hattin in 1187, Zengi showed just how fragile even the most elaborate fortifications were in the absence of adequate garrisons or timely reinforcements.

Over the following months, the Edessan frontier moved further and further west, and the entire county gradually became untenable. By August 1150 the Franks accepted the inevitable, and began a systematic evacuation of their entire population, together with all those local Christians who wanted to leave.[131]

The Frontiers of Tripoli, 1137–64

The County of Tripoli had always been hard to defend, even before the fall of Edessa. It consisted of a relatively narrow strip of land along the coast, between the kingdom of Jerusalem to the south and the Principality of Antioch to the north. Much of the population were independently minded mountain-folk and, regardless of their religious affiliation (many of them were Christian), had their own interests to pursue: they could not always be relied on in a crisis. The county was almost surrounded by Muslim states: Shaizar in the north-east, Hama and Homs to the east, and Baalbek to the south-east. As an added complication, there was also an Isma'ili (Assassin) enclave, sometimes an ally, sometimes tributary, but never entirely trustworthy.

Even before the Muslim states began to coalesce under the influence of the new generation of Turkic strongmen and their nomadic mercenaries, Tripoli had borders which were barely defensible, and the local Frankish military were clearly over-stretched. This was sustainable when the Muslim states were disunited and under-resourced, as the counts of Tripoli could play one off against the other. When they were united and well supplied with Turkic troops, however, the county would always have to rely on others for help.[132]

It was the gradual centralisation of power by Muslim strongmen that forced the counts of Tripoli to take a hard look at the defence of their eastern frontiers. Zengi, even before the capture of Edessa, held Hama and, in June 1138, he had taken control of Homs as well. He had also begun to make significant inroads on the County of Tripoli. He had captured the important fortified towns of Montferrand and Raphaniya in 1137.[133] The ability of the local Frankish lords to defend their fiefs was looking more and more doubtful, and it was clear that what was always a potentially fragile frontier was fast becoming indefensible. The neighbouring crusader states could help out from time to time in providing troops to beat off invaders, but the long-term defence of frontiers that were looking increasingly fixed but vulnerable would need different, more consistent, resources.

Map 8 The County of Tripoli
Source: After Barber 2012, p. 88 and Richard 1945.

The military orders were the obvious solution. Only they had the resources to allow them to improve, build and garrison key fortifications without any immediate payback other than the

fulfilment of their broader 'corporate objective' of defending Christendom. The first major grant to the military orders in Tripoli took place in 1142, but its stipulations were so detailed and so far-reaching that it must have been the subject of extensive discussions for some time before. The Hospitallers were given massive tracts of land on the north-east of the county, including the castle which later became known as Crac des Chevaliers, creating a bulwark against the threat of Zengid troops operating out of Homs and Hama.[134]

There was no doubt who held the upper hand in the negotiations. The count of Tripoli needed the Hospitallers far more than they needed him. Humiliating details were written into the agreement stressing Hospitaller independence. They were doing Tripoli a favour. Spoils from all military activity were to belong solely to the order, with the count of Tripoli only taking a share if he and his troops were also taking part. The Hospitallers stressed that they owed no service to the count for this substantial march, and inserted clauses indemnifying themselves from potential requisition or damage if his men were forced to take refuge in their castles. Only a desperate feudal overlord would have agreed, and seemingly agreed gladly, to these terms.

The Hospitallers did not have much time to improve their new castles. In 1148 Zengi's son, Nur al-Din, launched another attack into the heart of the County of Tripoli and captured the castle of Arima with disturbing ease. The Muslim troops 'surrounded the castle and made an assault upon it, the 'askars of Nur al-Din and Mu'in al-Din having been joined by a detachment of about a thousand cavalry from the 'askar of [Mosul]. Both sides engaged actively in the struggle and most of the garrison were killed or made prisoner.'[135]

The Muslims felt that it was untenable to hold on to a castle so deep in Frankish territory, and instead slighted (i.e. damaged it to make it unusable) and abandoned it. But the strategic balance had shifted. When Arima was eventually reoccupied, it was not just rebuilt. The count of Tripoli, who could ill-afford to repair or re-garrison it, gave the castle to the Templars. Under its new owners, the castle was not only renewed but massively improved. A number of square towers were added, including a strong new entrance tower and gates, vaulted undercrofts, and halls.[136]

Upgraded fortifications were needed more than ever. In April 1152 Nur al-Din launched another, even more daring invasion into the county. He attacked the coastal castle of Tortosa with his 'askar, and those 'of the Franks who were in it were killed, and the remainder asked for, and were granted, security for their lives. Having placed a garrison in it, he withdrew and took possession of a number of other castles either by the sword, accompanied by the capture of prisoners,

and destruction and burning, or by capitulation.'[137]

A look at the map shows just how audacious this invasion was. An assault through to the coast effectively split the county in two. Critically, this was a genuine invasion and land grab, rather than just a raid. Tortosa was placed under a garrison, together with various other castles along the route back to Muslim territory. Nur al-Din had no fleet of his own, and the Egyptian navy was ill-equipped to help, even if it had been so inclined. So the garrison was expected to stay there, to live off the hinterland and to be resupplied by the new Muslim possessions that linked it back to Hama, Homs and Shaizar.

If this situation had persisted, the Tripolitan territories to the north of Tortosa would have formed a rump that was tenable only with the support of the princes of Antioch. Its territories to the south would have become increasingly dependent upon Jerusalem. But, even more importantly, the crusader states would have been fatally split, and the field army of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem would no longer have been able to offer close support for campaigning in the north. Nur al-Din's plan, coming so soon after the collapse of the County of Edessa, was an indication not only of how confident he was, but also of the profound inadequacy of Frankish border defences and the 'phase two' castles that they depended on.

In the event, his plan was over-ambitious. King Baldwin III of Jerusalem moved his army up to Tripoli soon afterwards and Nur al-Din's troops were forced to withdraw, pausing only to devastate the town. But once again, the Franks had been forced to play catch-up. Another agreement was made in the middle of 1152, this time with the Templars, under which they agreed to enlarge both the castle and the town's defences.[138] Thus, alongside the Hospitaller march controlling much of the north-east of the county, we now also find large swathes of the rest of the north in Templar hands. With the frontiers crumbling, yet more secular authority was handed over to the only people who could afford to make the essential castle upgrades: the military orders.

Significantly, the new Templar fortifications at Tortosa, of the late 1150s and 1160s, were a blueprint for many of the design features that were later to be incorporated into the classic concentric castles of the 1170s and 1180s. A double line of walls, each protected by a moat, was an integral part of the new design from its inception: a template was developing which would be needed very soon. Experimentation had begun in earnest, and the master builders of the military orders were focusing their minds on the shape the 'new castles' of the crusader states would have to take.[139]

The rot had set in, and no one was immune. Having captured Banyas in 1164, Nur al-Din launched another major attack through the County of Tripoli and down into the north of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1166–7. While the Frankish field army was campaigning in Egypt, his forces:

> assembled at Homs and then Nur al-Din took his troops into Frankish territory. They passed by [Crac des Chevaliers] and carried out plundering raids. They made for 'Arqa and put it under siege. They also besieged Halba [a crusader castle inland from the port of Tripoli] which they took and destroyed. They took [Arima] and [Chastel Blanc, further north and inland from Tortosa] and then returned to Homs.[140]

With barely a pause, he took his troops south and they 'marched to attack the fortress of [Chastel Neuf] which was held by the Franks, one of their most impregnable fortresses and castles. The Franks fled and set fire to it. The day after that Nur al-Din arrived and razed its walls completely.'[141]

It was dissent and exhaustion among his own men, rather than intervention by Christian troops, that eventually forced Nur al-Din to bring his campaign to a halt. Even the Hospitaller forces at Crac des Chevaliers had just hunkered down behind their walls and let the invaders do their worst to the surrounding countryside and more vulnerable castles. Muslim troops did not occupy Chastel Neuf but the destruction was thorough.[142] Nur al-Din's campaign of 1167 was both the death knell for the 'phase two' castles and the impetus for the design of the new concentric castle.

It is one thing to know what needs to be done. It is quite another to have the money and manpower to do it, however. The king and his nobles could cope with small upgrades of existing castles in the interior, but they could not cope with the massive rebuilding programmes that were becoming increasingly essential for the frontiers. As the external balance of power shifted more in favour of the Muslim states, so too the internal balance of power shifted away from the local Frankish rulers and their nobles, and over to the military orders, with all the leverage that came from their access to pan-European resources. The task of building and manning the next generation of castles was increasingly entrusted to the Hospitallers and Templars.[143]

With the Frankish field army on campaign in Egypt for much of the 1160s, every weakness of the 'phase two' castles could be exploited at leisure, and their enemies were increasingly well equipped to do so. The growing geopolitical isolation of the crusader states meant that their armies were frequently fighting on several fronts at the same time and with predictable results. Relief forces took longer to muster and to arrive, and shifted the whole balance of advantage away from

the small Frankish garrisons and onto the increasingly large Muslim besieging forces.

Earlier castles were designed on the assumption that relief by a field army could be anticipated within a week or ten days. They could usually expect to face relatively small Muslim forces, with a high proportion of restless nomadic mercenaries and less sophisticated siege equipment. By the end of the 1160s, however, it was obvious that speedy relief could not always be relied upon; that the Muslim forces had far more substantial siege equipment at their disposal; and that they had so many archers to hand that their firepower could protect miners and assault teams from interference by defenders on the battlements. For all practical purposes, the majority of the crusaders' defensive infrastructure was obsolete.

Muslim armies were now able to conduct more effective sieges, because they had the numbers and skills in place to do so. Importantly, as crusader field armies were stretched ever more thinly, the morale of Frankish garrisons plummeted as they knew their chances of relief became more distant. The old crusader castles had not become obsolete because of technological advances: it was just that the same techniques could now be applied in a more focused way and with less likelihood of interruption.

Siege Without Victory, Defence Without Hope

Crusader castles were upgraded to add more time to the defender's side of this equation: time for a relief force to be gathered and come to the rescue; or time for a Muslim force, many of whom were volunteers serving for plunder, to get bored and start to disperse. On that very tight definition of the objectives, the new castles met their brief.

They did not collapse quickly in the face of a massive enemy presence. They could sustain a garrison for far longer than the castles of previous generations. Where the older castles might fall to the enemy within a matter of days, state-of-the-art fortifications in the 1170s and 1180s held on. Well-motivated troops in Belvoir, a rebuilt Chastel Neuf, and Montréal were able to hold out, isolated and vastly outnumbered, long after the Christian lands had been overrun. So, within the specific objectives of their brief, the 'phase three' castles achieved some success.

But they were always only a partial solution to a problem whose resolution ultimately lay outside of Frankish control. The crusader states needed to hang on until Muslim factionalism returned to play a more significant role, and until armies of reinforcements could arrive from Europe. Both of these things happened, but it took years rather than months for them to take place. Even the garrison of Kerak could not wait that long.

The failure of the Frankish concentric castle was not the triumph of Muslim siegecraft: rather, it was a consequence of the much broader defeat of a society that had run out of options. Once their field army had been destroyed, as it was at Hattin, there were no relief columns to come to the rescue and no amount of defiance on the part of their garrisons, the diehards of the Frankish military, could win the day.

Ultimately, in the 'dialogue' between castles and besiegers, everyone ended up playing to their strengths, as was only rational. The Franks never had the manpower to become effective at inland sieges, and gradually turned instead to the development of stronger and more elaborate castles as a means of controlling border areas with the limited number of troops at their disposal. The Muslim powers, on the other hand, were more rarely on the receiving end of sieges, particularly after the 1120s, and were able to devote resources to enhance their unique advantages: the ability to deploy men in such numbers that they could capture fortifications quickly by mining, laying down suppressing fire and minimising interference from Frankish garrisons, or by destroying any relief column that came to their aid.

Saladin gets most of the glory associated with defeating the crusader states. But it was his predecessor, Nur al-Din, who pushed the vast majority of crusader castles into obsolescence. He forced the Franks to divert a huge proportion of their military spending into state-of-the-art fortifications, money that could otherwise have been used to make ever more essential upgrades to their field armies. He did this not by making any major technological breakthroughs, but by applying overwhelming force to simple and traditional techniques: new catapults helped but it was miners, massed archers and scaling ladders that broke the Frankish frontiers.

Ironically, despite Saladin's attempts to degrade Frankish military capabilities in the decade running up to Hattin, the new generation of castles were some of the best fortifications in the world. Far from becoming more vulnerable, and despite the improvements in siege resources and skills on the Muslim side, the balance of power between besieger and the besieged swung back in the crusaders' favour during this period. The big frontier castles such as Kerak and Belvoir were now capable of holding out against large armies for lengthy periods of time, extending their life expectancy way beyond the necessities of military logic. The new generation of crusader castles could continue to defend the country, even when there was no longer a country to defend.

PART III

Crusading Enemies

CHAPTER 8

War with Egyptians

HAVING GOT USED TO the idea that crusader armies were not really crusaders, we turn to their southern enemies: the armies of the Muslim Egyptian state and their Shi'ite Fatimid rulers. Which, as we have seen, were neither Muslim nor Egyptian.[1]

Self-deprecating humour is unusual in the Muslim chronicles, but in the case of the Fatimid army, exceptions were made. The Damascus chronicle of Ibn al-Qalanisi, discussing the Egyptian defeat at Ramla in 1101, refers, presumably tongue in cheek, to the unfortunate Muslim commander as 'General Disastrous', killed because his horse fell over when the Franks attacked. This was a Sunni text, written in a Turkic-dominated state, about the army of a Shi'ite regime. But even so, it is clear that the Fatimid army, despite its size and resources, never earned the respect of its enemies, or even its occasional allies.[2]

To understand why this was so, we need to re-examine how we envisage Egypt and its people in the early twelfth century. The Christian province of Egypt had been overrun by Muslim armies relatively early on in the convulsions known as the Arab conquests. The last Romano-Byzantine troops left towards the end of 642, ending almost a thousand years of control by Hellenistic and Roman governments.[3]

The new occupying forces were relatively small in number and mainly settled around military bases. No attempt was made to convert the local, mainly Christian, population.[4] In the first century of Arab rule the Muslim population has been estimated as no more than 3 per cent of the total.[5] Demographically, Egypt remained mainly Christian but, for obvious reasons, it was important that the majority of the population stayed demilitarised and focused on what it did best: producing an economic surplus.

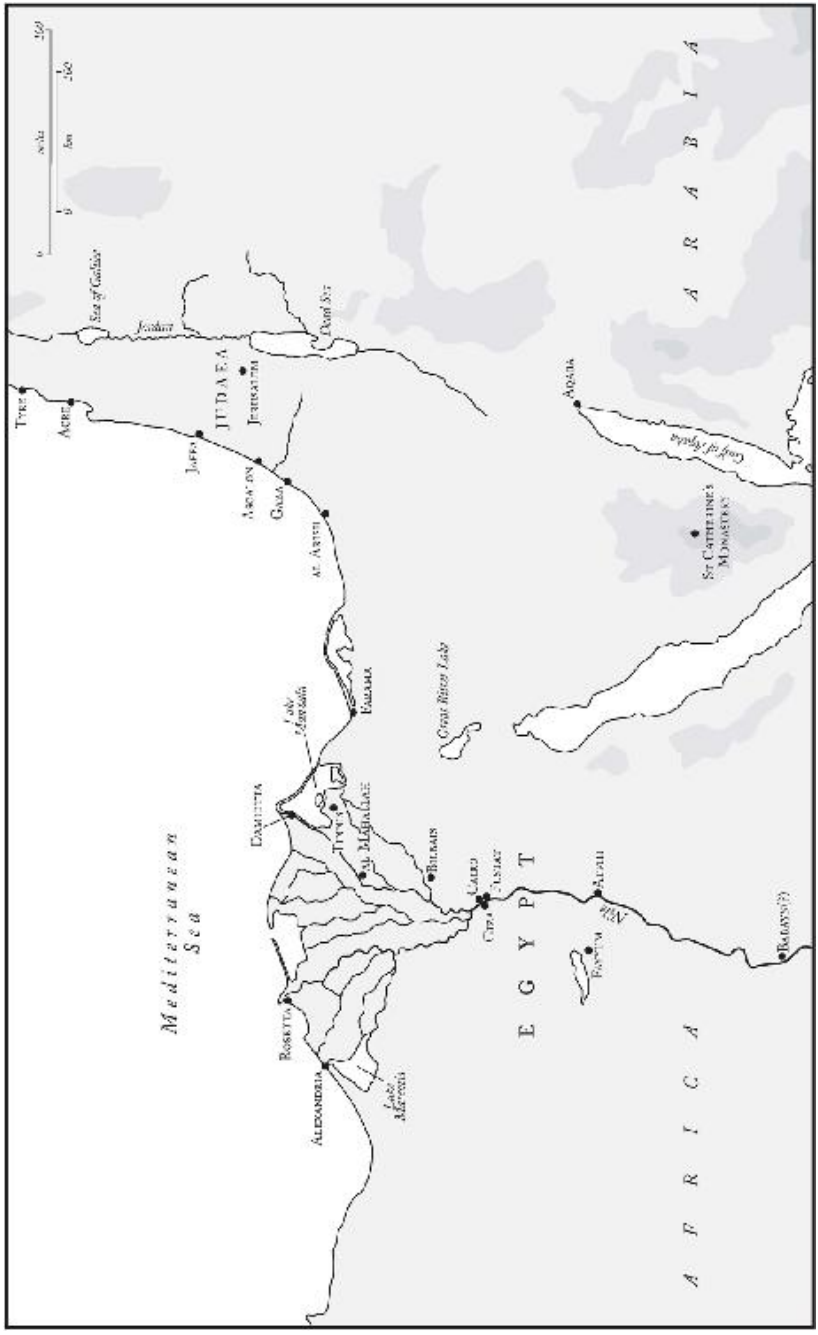
A gradual, generally unforced, process of Islamisation took place, but the population continued to be deeply divided. Even within the Muslim communities many, often most, remained Sunni in their

devotions. The fractured nature of the Egyptian populace was reflected in the polyglot nature of the Fatimid army, even in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Those tensions, an underlying lack of cultural cohesion, low levels of emotional commitment to the state and a debilitating focus on internal security and politics, were reflected in the way the army performed.[6]

Historians always try to say something interesting and counterintuitive about life's losers, and particularly about armies that fail. The Italian army of the Second World War was not really so bad, they occasionally suggest, and achieved some remarkable things. Napoleonic Spanish troops had far more success than they are given credit for. And so on. But ultimately, you would always rather face Italians in the Second World War than Germans; and you would prefer to face a Spanish army than a French one in the Napoleonic Wars. It was the same with the crusades. One can make a lot of excuses for the Egyptian army. By the standards of the time it was a very substantial fighting force: with an army of that size it would be surprising indeed if they achieved nothing. But you would always rather face an Egyptian army than a Turkic one.[7]

Army and State

There was a long and unhealthy tradition of ethnic and religious division within the Egyptian army. The Fatimid regime was Shi'ite, and that naturally created tensions between them and the Sunni states to the north, as well as with some of their Sunni subjects and mercenary contingents. There were also long-standing ethnic and political enmities between Egyptians and Turks that were always close to the surface.[8] It was difficult to hire the best Turkic cavalry, and forging lasting alliances against the crusader states was almost impossible. But the problems went deeper than that.



Map 9 Egypt and the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem
Source: After Barber 2012, p. 239.

In the summer of 1062, tensions rose between what they called the 'Black' slave regiments (largely infantry units composed of Nubian and other recruits from sub-Saharan Africa) and Sunni Turkic forces in

Fatimid employ, as the different groups competed for a greater share of power and influence. Full-scale fighting broke out, which the Turkic troops won, and some of the Black units were driven out of Cairo, the capital. A few years later, in 1066–7, while William the Conqueror and his foreign mercenaries were effecting regime change in the pursuit of profit in England, the Turkic troops in Egypt were doing much the same. Fighting between Turkic and Black regiments erupted again in the capital, resulting in another victory for the Turks. This time the fighting spread into the provinces, however, and full-scale civil war broke out. Anarchy resulted, with widespread destruction around the capital and disastrous economic consequences.[9]

The civil war was only stopped in 1073–4 by the intervention of a talented new hardman, who re-established stability and created what was in effect a military dictatorship in Egypt. Badr al-Jamali, the new ruler, had been the Egyptian governor of Acre until 1073, and was an Armenian Muslim. Supported by large numbers of his fellow Armenians, who actually tended to be Christian, he rebuilt the Egyptian state, shaping the army into one that could be relied on to support his new regime. This inevitably meant that an army which had previously been dominated by Turkic mercenaries and Black slave regiments now became increasingly split into Black and Armenian units, with the Armenians, like the Turks before them, controlling the more lucrative and prestigious mounted arm, and the Africans constituting most of the infantry.[10]

By the beginning of the twelfth century, the Egyptian army was the largest in the region. It was a regular, standing force. Apart from the Byzantines, who could show only an occasional presence, and even then just for short periods of time, the Egyptian army was the closest thing to a modern, well-trained and equipped standing force. It was never as large as the more fantastical exaggerations of some medieval chroniclers, but it was almost always larger than the armies it opposed.

Its exact size and composition inevitably varied, but during the twelfth century it seems to have consisted of approximately 20,000–30,000 ‘regular’ troops. On campaign, many men would be left behind for internal security, but the size of most expeditions would be boosted, perhaps doubled, by the presence of additional auxiliaries and ‘volunteers’ recruited for the occasion. About half of the regular troops were stationed in Cairo at any one time, with the others generally garrisoned on the borders or in coastal towns.[11]

Regular army units were large, perhaps 3,000–5,000 strong. A single Egyptian regiment, if present at full strength on the battlefield, would be as numerous as many crusader armies of the period. In practical terms, it is perhaps better to think of them as brigades or

divisions. Certainly not all of a regiment would necessarily be deployed together on a single campaign, and we know that separate smaller groups could be sent off as detachments to go on specific missions. Similarly, there was doubtless a depot element of each regiment retained at a home base, even while the units were deployed elsewhere. These unit sizes were remarkably large for the period, however. Fatimid armies sometimes seem to be cumbersome and lacking in tactical flexibility, and the large unit sizes may have been a contributory factor.

Like the Byzantine army, the Egyptians always had far more to worry about than any single enemy, or any single expedition. We tend to focus on their interactions with the crusader states, but the Egyptian military never had the luxury of giving the Franks their full attention. There were border towns in the south to be garrisoned, as well as the Maghreb and the coastal cities of Egypt and Palestine. There were policing and security issues to be addressed throughout the country. And, most importantly for a highly politicised army, there was always Cairo to guard. The primary objective of the army was to ensure stability for the Fatimid government and the continued influence of the military.[12]

Consequently, any expeditionary force in southern Palestine was always going to be far smaller than the theoretical total army size. It is likely that the regular element of any given Fatimid expedition consisted of no more than, say, 5,000–12,000 troops. They could also be expanded by the inclusion of some of the coastal garrisons, although this necessarily increased the vulnerability of the remaining Fatimid towns in Palestine if things went wrong. At the battle of Ascalon in 1099, for instance, there were significant numbers of troops from Ascalon itself, but also soldiers from the other Fatimid-controlled cities on the Palestinian coast. Numbers would also be increased by temporarily recruiting irregular forces, including Bedouin from Egypt or Palestine hired for a specific campaign, and other volunteers who felt there might be opportunities for plunder. In some of the early expeditions in Palestine, Fatimid city militia were also called on, though their military effectiveness on the offensive was always questionable. Again, it is hard to be exact, but these irregulars and auxiliaries could perhaps double the size, if not fighting power, of the Egyptian field army.

Cavalry

The well-armoured Armenian regular units were the backbone of the Fatimid cavalry in the twelfth century. The Armenians were mainly Christians, renowned for their skills as archers, both mounted and on foot.[13] There were so many Armenian Christian troops and their

families that they had to build their own churches in Cairo, and we know that the garrison of Ascalon, which had a large cavalry contingent for aggressive patrolling and probing attacks, was also largely Armenian. Inward migration was probably helped by the good employment prospects offered by an Armenian-dominated Fatimid government, coupled with continuing political instability in Cilician Armenia in the early twelfth century.[14]

The Armenian cavalry were armed for close-quarters fighting, and Fatimid heavy or elite cavalry were similarly equipped to their Frankish or Byzantine equivalents. Their normal weapons would have included a spear or javelin and a sword. A mace or axe could be carried as well, and a dagger as a weapon of last resort. Indeed, when reading Usama, who fought in the Fatimid army for a while, the jousting and skirmishing of his Armenian companions in Ascalon seems remarkably similar to that of their Frankish opponents.[15]

At least some of the Fatimid heavy cavalry were armed with a bow, probably in addition to other weapons. Cavalry training in archery was prevalent but, interestingly, these mounted archers were not used in the Turkic manner, and did not operate as skirmishing light cavalry. Instead, their firepower seems to have been added to that of the Fatimid infantry in attempting to disrupt and degrade the crusaders' cavalry charge.[16]

Given the relatively poor performance of the Fatimid heavy cavalry against the crusaders, it is tempting to suggest that they must have been in some way more lightly or inadequately equipped. The evidence does not support this. On the contrary, what we know of Egyptian military equipment and supplies at the time indicates that their men were very well armed indeed. The inventories of Fatimid arsenals have survived and confirm the excellent range of weapons and armour at their disposal.[17]

Perhaps somewhat perversely, the evidence points to the Fatimid cavalry arm being every bit as heavily equipped and armoured as its crusader opponents. In fact, it was so well equipped that although many of the Fatimid troopers were armed with bows, they could not easily fulfil the role of light cavalry archers even if their training and operational doctrine had permitted them to do so. Ibn al-Athir explicitly says that the Fatimid cavalry were slow in joining battle against the Franks at Ascalon in 1099 because it took them so long to put on all their armour.[18]

Fatimid troops had access to state-manufactured armours, including mail hauberks, lamellar cuirasses and other forms of padded and mail-lined defensive equipment. Even horses within cavalry elite units could be significantly better protected than their Frankish peers. Before the crusaders arrived, there was already an established Fatimid

tradition of horse armour being worn: the cavalry at a ceremonial parade in 1047, for instance, were described as riding horses covered in mail or lamellar armour. There is also some archaeological evidence, including wall paintings, to suggest that Nubian cavalry of the period, some of whom may have been in Egyptian service, used armour of metal or leather to protect the heads of their mounts.[19]

Similarly, the Fatimid army had the money and centralised structures to ensure that it was at least as technologically advanced as the crusaders, if not more so. As well as being able to source supplies from other Muslim countries, Egypt's position as a maritime trading nation gave it access to European sources of raw materials and equipment: a succession of Papal decrees shows the difficulties encountered in stopping the Italian city states, in particular, from engaging in the arms trade with Egypt, even in time of war. A weapons factory with 3,000 skilled workers was established in a special new building next to the eastern palace in the fortified city of Cairo. This was clearly a vital part of the military structure and, after being destroyed by fire in 1068/9, it was quickly rebuilt. Not only were supplies of good-quality equipment available but, given the existence of state-run factories, there may even have been an element of standardisation within some units. If the Egyptian army was to fail, it would not be because of any lack of equipment or resources.[20]

As with many aspects of Fatimid military activity, the issue was less about kit and more about motivation, fighting spirit and aggression. All its armour and equipment inclined the Egyptian cavalry to meet the Frankish knights head on, but without the aggression or initiative that would allow them to succeed.

If problems with the heavy cavalry were a concern, however, the issue of how to source good light cavalry was even more pressing, and never satisfactorily resolved. The Fatimid army had continual difficulty in attracting and retaining large numbers of mounted archers.

Turkic mercenaries were always sought, but were never to hand in sufficient quantity and never consistently available. This was partly caused by political tensions between the Shi'ite Fatimid state and the Turkic-dominated Sunni regimes in northern Palestine and Syria. Scarcity was also exacerbated by geography: Turkic warriors coming off the steppes would find their services in great demand from many employers before they reached Egypt and, moreover, employers with more similar ethnic and religious backgrounds. The lack of good pasture in Egypt did not help either, as Turkic cavalry were traditionally dependent on having access to large strings of ponies. Individual Turkic or Syrian mercenaries were always welcome, but they were never available in sufficiently large groups to change the

nature or performance of the Egyptian army as a whole.

This was well understood by the Fatimid administration and they recognised that the only way around this was to establish contacts at a high political level: if they could not hire independent bands of nomads, they could at least try to acquire Turkic units as 'allied contingents'. They put out feelers to Damascus to assist with their early campaigns against the crusaders and succeeded in persuading Tughtigin to provide a unit of 1,300 mounted archers for the battle at Ramla in 1105.[21] These troops were, not coincidentally, the best performing unit on the Fatimid side and confirmed that the Egyptian administration were entirely correct in trying to get hold of them.

Similarly, the defence of Tyre in 1124 was largely carried out by Turkic mercenaries provided by Damascus, but financed by the Fatimid administration. The Franks certainly felt that the Turkic troops were significantly better than the city militia and the garrison provided by the Egyptian military. One chronicler, for instance, wrote that there 'were in the city seven hundred knights of Damascus, whose example inspired the citizens with courage to resist, for the latter, though noble, were weak and effeminate in character and not at all accustomed to war'.[22]

Problems in accessing Turkic troops continued, however, though the Fatimids kept trying, almost until the end of the regime. In 1150 Usama was sent to try to get Nur al-Din's permission for a limited recruitment drive. Despite the gifts and money that were provided and the diplomatic skills of Usama himself (never shy, he claims that these were considerable), they were only allowed to recruit the second-rate men who were surplus to requirements. At best, the Egyptians were forced to pay top dollar for relatively small numbers of Turkic troops that other people, for whatever reason, did not want.[23]

The Egyptian high command knew that they needed Turkic troops to help them beat the crusaders but they could never get enough of them. Ironically (and giving credence to the Fatimid government's recruitment objectives, if not their achievements), the regime was eventually toppled by relatively small numbers of such troops led by Shirkuh and Saladin only a few years later.

In the absence of good Turkic light cavalry, the Fatimids were forced to look elsewhere. The lack of pasture which discouraged Turkic recruits from venturing that far south also helps explain the continued Egyptian reliance on Arab or Bedouin auxiliaries. The Bedouin could maintain a semi-independent existence within Egypt because the Fatimid administration lacked the light mounted troops to police them effectively. It also meant that the Egyptian state needed to use them, unreliable as they were, as auxiliaries on expeditions such as those against the kingdom of Jerusalem.[24]

The battlefield effectiveness of such troops was inevitably limited but that is perhaps to judge them unfairly. Their main roles were in the run-up to battle and in its aftermath, rather than in close combat. But their performance was always studiedly ambiguous. After a battle they would generally look to exploit the weakness of the losing side, regardless of whether or not that was their employer. They were also notoriously 'neutral' when dealing with stragglers, as likely to rob and kill their own side as the enemy. The Bedouin were always a poor and unreliable substitute for good-quality Turkic mounted archers.[25]

Infantry

The Fatimids were unusual in having a large regular infantry element in their army, at a time when other Muslim states, with more of a nomadic military heritage, were almost entirely cavalry focused. Most of the Fatimid regular infantry in our period appear to have been sub-Saharan Africans recruited for the 'Black' regiments ('Sudanis'), though not all infantry were Sudani, and not all Sudani were infantry.

The main source of these infantry were the two Nubian kingdoms to the south of Egypt, both of which had been Christian since the sixth century: Alwa and Makuria. They provided good soldiers for the Egyptian army and access to manpower from the lands beyond, the undefined region south of Nubia known to the Fatimids as 'the land of the Masmuda'. These infantry were largely slaves, though there were also some volunteers and mercenaries. In terms of religion, they would have been either pagans or Christians, particularly if they were from Nubia itself.[26] They tended to live in barracks in the Mansuriya quarter of Cairo, though some were billeted in surrounding villages.[27]

In a modern context, one usually associates a regimental system with the ability to create unit pride and increase combat effectiveness through an enhanced esprit de corps. In the Egyptian army, however, regimental distinctions seem to have been used as an excuse to drive factionalism and political tensions still further into an already highly politicised organisation, creating checks and balances to ensure that no particular faction within the officer corps could accumulate too much power.

Regular infantry were grouped into units, and in some cases we have enough evidence to create an outline 'regimental history'. Symptomatic of the times, many of their 'battle honours' involved fighting other Egyptian or other Muslim forces. The Rayhaniya, for instance, were a Black infantry regiment garrisoned in the eponymous district of Cairo and consisting of up to 5,000 men.[28] They took thousands of casualties fighting a rival regiment, the Juyushi, in 1134 and again in 1149, during periods of political in-fighting. Being on the losing side once too often, they were ousted from Cairo and fled to

Giza.[29]

The Juyushi regiment seems to have been another Black infantry unit by the beginning of the twelfth century, though it may have started life as an elite Armenian mixed-arms (cavalry and infantry) group along much the same lines as some late Roman units.[30] The Faranjiya regiment, ostensibly a unit of Frankish (or 'Faranji') soldiers, seems to have been at least partly composed of European slave soldiers who appear to have been infantry. Politicised as ever, we know that they picked the wrong side in the upheavals that followed the takeover of Egypt by the Turkic–Kurdish forces in the late 1160s. They fought Saladin in 1168 and were presumably disbanded soon after.[31]

Large numbers of the Fatimid infantry were bow-armed close-order troops, but other, more distinctive, weapons were also used. These weapons, fielded by what were, to the crusaders, exotic troops, were bound to attract attention and the chroniclers focused on them more than their effectiveness warranted. We know that long maces were used extensively in the Fatimid army, sometimes employed by the cavalry, but particularly associated with the Black infantry regiments.[32] Albert of Aachen wrote of the battle of Jaffa in 1102 that the Nubian infantry 'who were stationed in the middle of the thousands of gentiles, attacked the king and his men with cudgels made in the manner of hammers from iron and lead, and they hit not only the knights but also their horses hard on the forehead and their other limbs'.[33] Probably better at keeping enemy cavalry at bay were the long spears or pikes (around 11 to 12ft in length) with which a group of infantry known as 'saririya' were armed. Other infantry were described as being armed with swords and shields. Nubian infantry skirmishers also featured heavily in the regular Fatimid army, and tended to use javelins, slings and bows.[34]

There seems to have been an element of institutionalised racial prejudice against the Black regiments. High-level promotions were extremely rare and their colleagues in the cavalry regiments seem to have had little compunction about deserting them on the battlefield. The lack of status was reflected in the way the Black regiments were used. They were often thrown forward, placed where they would have no choice but to absorb the first impact of a crusader charge, and treated as if they were eminently expendable. Usama, for instance, himself an officer in the Egyptian military in the early 1150s, describes the poor performance of the Fatimid infantry outside Ascalon in a manner full of ethnic and social contempt, calling them 'defenceless, useless fools'.[35]

Tactical Deployment

The Fatimid army tended to deploy with the infantry in the centre of the line. Light infantry skirmishers, slingers, archers and so on, could be thrown out in front to try to disrupt the enemy charge. They would be equipped with a wide variety of hand-to-hand weapons: spears, swords, maces, and the large concussive clubs and whips that the crusaders found so unfamiliar and disturbing. The Black regiments at the battle of Ascalon made great use of such weapons, and had 'iron-tipped and savage whips, which they used to penetrate hauberks and shields with a severe blow, strike horses on the face, and make a terrible noise'. More prosaically, we are also told that they were 'sent ahead in front of the battle and attacked the [Franks] fiercely with a hail of arrows'.[36]

Behind this exotic but fragile defensive outer crust, ranks of spearmen and archers would form up. The basic principle seems to have been for the front rank of spears to kneel down as the enemy approached so that the archers, who also knelt in combat, could fire to full effect when the enemy were in range. The heavy cavalry would be deployed behind the infantry lines in the centre of the army, ready to charge through gaps in the infantry formations when appropriate. Lighter cavalry would be positioned on either side of the line, to extend the frontage, outflank the enemy and threaten their baggage train.

The normal plan, when facing crusader armies, seems to have been for the two layers of infantry in the centre to try to inflict casualties on the Frankish cavalry by archery fire, and to absorb the initial shock of their impact.[37] At that point, just as the crusader charge was hopefully losing momentum, the Fatimid heavy cavalry would counter-charge the disorganised Franks, while the light cavalry on the flanks or rear were simultaneously enveloping them. This seems a good plan in theory, but in practice it failed on almost every occasion, even when their Frankish opponents were significantly outnumbered.

There were several reasons why this was so. The infantry archers doubtless caused some damage to the crusader heavy cavalry as they charged in, but the strength of their armour and the speed of their approach meant that it was never going to be enough. There is no record of Fatimid archery ever stopping a Frankish cavalry charge.

They were probably never really expected to. The Black infantry units were there to disrupt the Frankish cavalry charge, and to absorb as much of their energy as possible before breaking. This was hardly a high-status or motivating role for the infantry, and may help explain some of the inter-unit antagonism within the army. The success of this plan depended on the capacity of the Fatimid cavalry to play their part. The heavy cavalry were expected to engage and destroy the now tired crusader cavalry. This never worked well, however, because the

Frankish cavalry were of excellent quality and were generally able to put up a good fight against the almost stationary Fatimid heavy cavalry.

The Franks also seemed to have deliberately countered Fatimid tactics by sending their cavalry into the charge in echelon, or in successive waves, allowing fresh troops to continually be thrown into action. This had the added benefit of providing protection for the flanks, making it difficult for Fatimid light cavalry to encircle the initial ranks of the crusader cavalry charge.

The plan also relied on the ability of the light cavalry to envelop the crusaders' flanks and rear. With waves of knights and other heavy cavalry making their outflanking task more difficult, however, Fatimid light cavalry often seem to have taken the easier, and financially more attractive, option of heading towards the enemy baggage train. Significantly, the only time the Fatimid field army beat Frankish cavalry was at the second battle of Ramla, in 1102. Here a vastly outnumbered Frankish cavalry force was surprised and failed to adopt its normal operating pattern, having no infantry to act as a reserve position around which the blown cavalry units might reform, and insufficient cavalry to launch attacks in waves.

The Battle of Ascalon, 12 August 1099

Jerusalem, at that time held by the Egyptians, fell to the crusaders on 15 July 1099, and the Fatimid military moved laboriously into position to counter the threat to their Palestinian possessions. The weaknesses inherent in the army were apparent from the very outset. Although localised factors might provide a short-term excuse for poor performance, the real problems were systemic: poor cohesion, lack of élan, over-politicisation and antagonism between the different elements of the army.

They faced the prospect of combat with the relatively small and rag-tag group of survivors of the First Crusade with a high degree of confidence, and were not entirely unjustified in doing so. The crusader army was certainly not 'elite' in the sense that we often use the word. It was not a small, highly trained group, selected from a much larger manpower pool. It was not inserted for a special mission, and then pulled out for re-equipment and counselling. If anything, the crusader army was the opposite of 'elite', at least in that sense. It was everyone. Cooks and stable lads. Priests and knights. Blacksmiths and archers. It was a Frankish community on the move, and a desperate one at that.[38]

But if it was not 'elite', with all its slightly pampered modern connotations, it was certainly veteran. Veteran in the same sense that Alexander the Great's army had been once it had spent years marching

across much the same ground. Like Alexander's ageing Macedonians, they had seen things they had never expected, spectacles and horrors they had never anticipated. More importantly, they had done things they could never have foreseen.

In the course of their journey, spanning several years of hardening experiences, across some of the most daunting terrain, a brutal selection process had taken place. The large group of armed pilgrims, combatants and non-combatants alike, had gradually been whittled down. Illness had taken off those who were not robust. The Turks had killed those who could not fight, and many of those who could. The survivors of the First Crusade were used to campaigning in a way that few others ever had been. With little logistical support, and facing some of the most challenging military and geographical obstacles, the crusader army of 1099 was a small but intensely effective group. As the Egyptian army was about to find out, those who had survived the march were some of the hardest fighting men in history.

The Fatimid army of this period took about two months to muster, gather its heavy equipment and then move into Palestine. Ascalon, the southernmost port in Palestine, was a major base for the Egyptian military and an obvious jumping-off point for any invasion. The plain of Ascalon, stretching up towards Ramla/Lydda in the north, provided a battlefield that was to be widely fought over for a decade or more to come. While the Franks settled in around Jerusalem, enjoying their strange new surroundings, the Egyptian army, siege train and navy slowly gathered.[39]

The mobilisation process itself may not have been undertaken with a sense of extreme urgency, but it was certainly thorough. Egyptian troops appear to have been pulled out of the inland Palestinian centres and moved back to Ascalon, and possibly the other coastal cities such as Tyre and Sidon as well: certainly, the crusaders did not encounter significant resistance anywhere in the Palestinian hinterland other than Jerusalem. The Fatimid mustering process was methodical. The successful siege of Jerusalem by the Egyptian army in August 1098 (when they recaptured the city from the Turks, having lost it to them in 1073) was far better prepared than that of the First Crusade in 1099 and was accompanied by a large number of catapults, together with the supplies necessary to build other siege engines.[40] This was an army fighting on its home territory, preparing to undertake a campaign that it must have felt was not too dissimilar to that which it had fought, and won, the year before. The logistics were in place and, as usual with crusading battles, the Franks were also heavily outnumbered. The Egyptian vizier, al-Afdal, must have felt extremely confident about the outcome.

The army at Ascalon represented a fairly full muster of an Egyptian

expeditionary force, so one would expect it to have incorporated most if not all of the units that were generally available. These would have included a large cavalry component, with the heavier units being provided by the Armenians, and the lighter cavalry composed mostly of Arabs, Bedouin and Berbers. The infantry were drawn largely from the Black regiments, but would also have included Armenian archers and irregulars such as the city militia volunteers. In light of the casualties reported by Muslim sources, and the overall size of the Egyptian regular army, it seems likely that about 18,000–20,000 Fatimid troops were present.

This was immensely impressive by medieval standards. The absentees were just as important as those who were present, however. First, it is significant that Fatimid armies did not contain large numbers of Egyptians. This had profound practical implications. As we have seen, the population of Egypt had been largely demilitarised since Hellenistic times. Instead, different (and generally foreign) ethnic groups were recruited, each with their own specialisms and capabilities, and each gathered into ethnically distinct units or regiments. At different times Turks, Persians, Daylami, Berbers, Nubians, Sudanese, Bedouin and Armenians had all formed their own contingents. This was a diverse army, largely based around soldier slaves and mercenaries.

Diversity and tactical specialism are not necessarily bad things, but they certainly demand greater qualities of generalship and place more stress upon the cohesion of the army as a whole. Leadership skills, never the strong suit of the Fatimid military, were always stretched. Ethnic diversity may also have been exacerbated by the diversity of religious belief: most of the Armenian and Nubian troops were Christians. Even among the Muslims, any mercenaries from the north were more likely to be Sunni rather than Shi'ite. Élan might exist on a regimental level but it was hard to find across the army as a whole. Serving in the Egyptian army was a job rather than an expression of cultural or religious commitment. Second, and perhaps even more importantly, most of the regulars seem to have been heavy troops accustomed to operating in close order. The troops the crusaders most feared, Turkic mounted archers, were almost entirely absent. In many respects, the Fatimid army at Ascalon was one that the Franks could understand well and deal with accordingly.

The Fatimid army may have had its problems, but at least it was large and mustering in a careful and coordinated manner. The crusaders, on the other hand, were struggling to compete. Their forces were small and dispersed. Their wayward leaders required persuasion and debate, rather than orders, to bring them to the muster points.

On 8 August 1099, Tancred, lord of Tiberias, and Eustace of

Boulogne, Godfrey of Bouillon's brother, captured several Fatimid scouts, an interesting early suggestion of the Frankish use of light cavalry: heavy troops would have found it difficult to capture enemy light cavalry scouts. Interrogation of these prisoners was extremely useful, including details of troop numbers, disposition and intent, presumably indicating the presence of Arabic-speaking auxiliaries within the Frankish army.[41] They learned that the Egyptian army was only waiting for the arrival of the fleet before they set off. The heavier siege equipment, of the kind which would best be carried by sea rather than by land, was still expected: al-Afdal envisaged besieging Jerusalem as the most likely outcome of the campaign. It was apparent that the Egyptians believed the crusaders to be on the strategic defensive, and that the Fatimid position at Ascalon was so strong that they would not be attacked.

Tancred and Eustace interpreted this intelligence correctly, and sent word to Godfrey: the Egyptian army was getting stronger by the day, but a bold attack might find them unprepared. The move would involve considerable risk, as the Frankish army would be heavily outnumbered and could potentially be swamped by enemy cavalry on the open terrain of the coastal plain. But it was the right decision. If the crusaders let the Egyptians take the initiative, the campaign could have only one outcome: a long drawn-out siege of Jerusalem with the Franks trapped inside, and with little prospect of external aid.

Godfrey sent messengers back to Jerusalem to muster every available man. If the army failed, the Holy City was completely indefensible anyway, so he knew that there was no point in keeping a significant garrison there. The defence of Jerusalem was instead left to God: Peter the Hermit was instructed to hold services to intercede for the fate of the army, with the Catholic clergy and other local Christian groups united in prayer.

It is hard to overestimate the precariousness of the Franks' military situation at this time. Godfrey's mission to Jerusalem on 9 August was entrusted to the bishop of Martirano and his entourage. The message got through but on his way back to the army the bishop just disappeared. He was never heard of again. Whether he was intercepted by Egyptian scouts, or whether he was killed or captured by one of the numerous groups of local bandits is unknown. But even high-status and presumably well-armed contingents, far behind the front line, were vulnerable. The crusaders' position was extremely weak.[42]

On 11 August 1099, the day before the battle, the different Frankish contingents gathered at Ibelin, with good water supplies nearby. The secular arm was as strong as possible, with all available men present. The spiritual resources of the crusader army were fully

represented too: while prayers continued, the clergy in the army carried the Holy Lance, discovered in Antioch, and the True Cross. Heaven and earth were to be gambled on this single throw. The day was overcast, which was particularly helpful for the European troops. Godfrey himself wrote a letter back to the west after the battle saying that the day was thankfully cloudy and had protected the army from the effects of the sun. For a devout and desperate army, every possible sign of God's favour was sought and welcomed.[43]

As the Franks reached the Rubin river near Ibelin, they thought the Egyptian army was upon them. Seeing a huge dust cloud ahead, a group of 200 knights was pushed forward as a reconnaissance unit, and perhaps, if necessary, to act as a masking force to delay the Egyptians long enough to allow the army to deploy.[44]

In fact, the dust cloud was caused by large numbers of camels and cattle, guided by herders and Arab light cavalry. The Arabs took a few casualties and then fled, leaving a small number of prisoners and a vast herd of animals behind. The captives confirmed, after the traditional unpleasantness (Raymond of Aguilers says, with an understated menace, that they were 'compelled' to speak), that the main Egyptian army was at Ascalon but, tellingly, did not have a clear sense of its size as reinforcements were arriving every day. The Frankish commanders now had confirmation that the Fatimid forces were still in the process of mustering, but would only get stronger over time. However risky advancing might seem, it was increasingly obvious that a quick assault stood the best chance of success.[45]

Loyalty to the Fatimid regime was limited, with locals, including those not under duress, providing valuable intelligence to the crusaders. Muslim notables, representatives of towns which had already surrendered to the Franks, were particularly helpful. Their counsel was taken very seriously and seems to have been given in good faith. The governor of Ramla volunteered information about Egyptian troop movements and tactics. There is also evidence that this Muslim leader, and at least some of the local population, fought for the new Frankish overlords in the forthcoming battle: Sunni militia volunteering against their old Shi'ite Egyptian masters.[46]

The crusader army, accustomed to fighting Turkic light cavalry and never having faced an Egyptian force before, behaved cautiously on the march. They formed up into nine units, with three in the middle, three in the front and three in the rear. Units were formed by regional contingents, with smaller groups or individuals doubtless falling in with larger groups, perhaps guided as much by the familiarity of regional languages or dialects as by anything more formal. This degree of caution may seem excessive with hindsight, given our knowledge of Egyptian operational practice. At the time, however, having fought

against nomadic light cavalry across most of the journey through Asia Minor and Syria, a tight advance in something approximating to an early 'fighting march' formation was only prudent. The Egyptian army had indeed deployed significant numbers of light cavalry archers earlier in the eleventh century and at this stage the crusaders were not to know that they now assumed a far less important role.[47]

The Frankish army formed ranks at dawn on 12 August 1099. Christian sources tell us that horns and trumpets were sounded to gather the army together. There was clearly no particular hope that a surprise attack could be launched. News of the crusaders' approach had been fed back to the Egyptian army on a daily basis. We know, for instance, that Egyptian scouting parties were operating extensively across southern Palestine, and that Fatimid light troops had two major skirmishes with the Franks on the preceding days.[48]

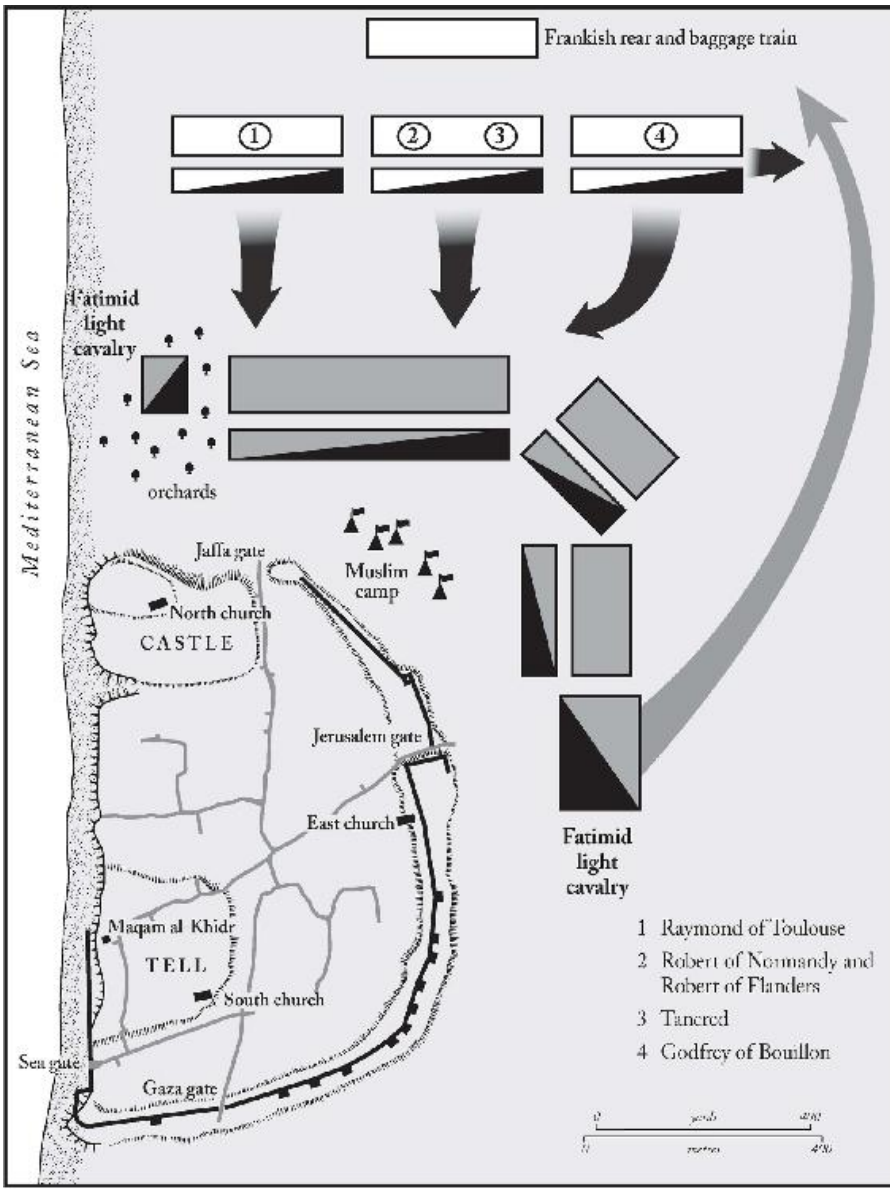
But, against all expectation, the Egyptian army, well-equipped professionals, operating on home territory, and screened by large numbers of scouts and foragers, was taken by surprise when the crusaders attacked. How could this possibly have happened?

Ironically, it looks as though the Egyptian army was overconfident, not because they were poorly informed, but rather because they knew too much. They had arrived at a low estimate of the level of threat posed by the Franks. In this context, the crusading force that captured the herders and livestock were probably interpreted as foragers and raiders, who would take their booty and return to Jerusalem. The small size of the Frankish forces played in their favour: the Egyptians knew they were there but they did not realise they were the entire army.

Ascalon was a strong and heavily fortified base for the Egyptian administration. It had been an important frontier town in their fight against the Turkic invaders, long before the crusaders arrived, and the port was a vital source of water and supplies for the Egyptian navy. By the standards of the day, it was very substantial, with semi-circular walls some 1.5km in length. Despite its size and strength, however, the Egyptian army was so large that most of it camped outside of town. Here it bordered on the orchards on the north, by the sea, and extending round to the north-east side of town. If there were any additional units based in the town itself, they do not seem to have played a significant role in the battle, perhaps because it was over so quickly.[49]

The crusader army was deployed into three or four main divisions. The right flank, protected by the sea, and facing the dense orchards to the north of the town, was held by Raymond of Toulouse and his men. The centre right was held by the two Roberts, counts of Flanders and Normandy.[50] Tancred commanded the centre-left, perhaps with some

of the lesser commanders who we know were also in the centre, such as Oliver of Jussey, Gerard of Quierzy and Rainald of Toul.[51]



Plan 6 The Battle of Ascalon, 1099
Source: After Pringle I, p. 62 and France 1994, p. 362.

Most of the Frankish army were stationed in these central formations. The baggage was presumably to the rear of this block. Godfrey of Bouillon, leading by example, kept the most difficult role for himself. Commanding the left flank, with nothing to rest it on, and vulnerable to envelopment by the Egyptian cavalry or to a sortie from

the town of Ascalon itself, this was the weakest and most fragile part of the army, and Godfrey wanted to personally manage the task. In the light of subsequent actions, it seems likely that Godfrey's wing had perhaps a disproportionate amount of cavalry, particularly lighter cavalry, whereas the centre had most of the infantry.

The numbers involved are inevitably hard to judge. Given the conditions of the time, even the commanders of the Frankish army probably did not have a definitive answer. Raymond of Aguilers was in the army, and suggested that the Franks had 1,200 knights and a maximum of 9,000 infantry.[52] Reflecting the possible use of local troops or light cavalry, we are told that infantry and archers were ordered to precede the knights into battle (i.e. with the distinction being made between 'pedites' and 'sagittarios'), and it may be that some of these bowmen were mounted archers, early examples of the Turcopoles we see being deployed soon after in large numbers, particularly in the northern crusader states.[53]

Numbers on the Egyptian side are similarly hard to establish. Ibn al-Qalanisi wrote that Muslim casualties amounted to 10,000 men, mainly infantry, volunteers and townspeople: as we shall see, the lack of mention of casualties from among the regular cavalry is telling.[54] The Muslim sources are no less contradictory than the Frankish ones, but it is possible to reconcile them by suggesting an infantry force of some 10,000 men of which perhaps 5,000 were volunteers from Ascalon and other local militias, with a further 5,000 regular infantry from Egypt. The cavalry may also have consisted of some 5,000 regulars from Egypt, joined by a similar-sized contingent of Bedouin and other irregular cavalry. This would give a not unreasonable figure of approximately 20,000 men, an overall force about twice the size of the crusader army.[55]

The Nubian troops were particularly commented on by the Europeans, who were impressed and mesmerised in equal measure. Showing a stunning lack of insight into Egyptian affairs, it was assumed that they were a separate allied army that had decided to come to help the Fatimids. One chronicle suggested that the 'race with very black skin from the land of Ethiopia . . . had decided to hold an assembly there at the city of Ascalon'. With the customary broadminded approach of newcomers from the west, the Nubian troops were described as 'dreadful and hideous men' ['viri horridi et teterrimi'].[56]

As well as their appearance, their unusual weapons aroused much interest. As we have seen, they used war-flails or whips that seemed particularly designed to deter cavalry, partly by their noise, and partly, more obviously, through the effect they would have if they connected with a horse's face. The sound, designed to frighten horses

and encourage them to veer away from contact, was increased by the deployment of massed trumpets and drums. Their archers even fired 'in their own fashion on bended knee': altogether an exotic blend.[57]

In the run-up to the battle, al-Afdal had sent emissaries to Jerusalem to 'rebuke' the Franks. They had recently returned and suggested that the crusaders were willing to negotiate. Al-Afdal may have interpreted this as a temporary truce.[58] He may even, up to a point, have been prepared to accept a limited Frankish presence in Palestine, perhaps to create a temporary buffer state between Shi'ite Egypt and the ferocious Sunni Turks to the north.[59] Perhaps he was hoping to use his army at Ascalon to intimidate the crusaders into entering into a compromise accommodation, and he may never have expected to have to deploy it on active service. If that was his thinking, he could not have been more wrong.

Surprise was total. As one Muslim chronicle put it, the 'Egyptians had no intelligence of their coming or that they had made any move. They were not ready for combat. The cry went up, "To horse" and they donned their armour but the Franks were too quick for them and put them to flight.' The relatively high proportion of casualties among the citizens of Ascalon indicates that local militia and civilians may also have been overrun in the course of the fighting.[60]

At the first onset of the Frankish army, soldiers from the Black infantry regiments were moved to the front to slow them down and disrupt their cavalry charge. Regular troops, but relatively lightly armed, they barely had time to deploy and could do little to halt the Franks: 'the Ethiopians . . . were sent ahead in front of the battle and attacked the [Franks] fiercely with a hail of arrows, making a thunderous noise with trumpets and drummers in order to frighten off the terrified horses and men'.[61] An unusual appearance and a lot of noise certainly excited the chroniclers, but had little effect on the impact of a heavy cavalry charge conducted by veteran troops. The leading ranks of the Black regiments, little more than what Renaissance generals sardonically came to call a 'forlorn hope', were routed and battle joined between the two armies. Behind them, the irregular auxiliaries and the regular cavalry tried to arm and deploy or, in increasing numbers, fall back to the town.

Some of the Arab light cavalry also started a wide outflanking manoeuvre, possibly on both flanks of the crusader army, but certainly against their left flank which, unlike Raymond of Toulouse's right flank, was up in the air. According to one Christian source, 'the pagans, an innumerable multitude, approached our formations like a stag thrusting forward the branches of his horns. They divided their advance formation, uncovering a flying wing of Arabs and managing to encircle our rear. As a result, Duke Godfrey went back with a heavy

body of mailed knights and rescued the rear line.'[62]

With the rear of the army and the baggage train saved by Godfrey's heavy cavalry, the way was clear for the crusaders' lines to move forward to prepare for the decisive knightly charge. Even as Godfrey was fending off Arab light cavalry from the rear of the army, the Frankish infantry archers were making efforts to screen the heavy cavalry in the first line, protecting them until the moment when an effective charge could be launched. Fulcher of Chartres wrote that when 'foe had approached foe, at a distance of a stone's throw or less, our footmen began to shoot arrows into their opponents, whose lines were extended. Soon the lance took the place of the arrow as our knights . . . made a violent onslaught. In the slaughter the slower of the horses of the enemy were thrown over on their riders.'[63] Fulcher's comment that the advanced Egyptian infantry were in extended formation was an apposite one: flails and whips may have had some effect, but they needed room to be used properly. And in a dispersed formation such as that, the Egyptian infantry would have been quickly brushed aside by the Frankish knights.

The two armies joined battle. The initial charge of the front line of Frankish knights destroyed the forward Ethiopian units, and moved on to hit the bulk of the Egyptian army behind them. The crusader cavalry appear to have caused severe disruption to the ill-prepared Fatimid troops, but although they were pushed back, they did not break entirely, and, with the momentum of the initial charge dissipating, there was a chance that they would either be able to organise a fighting retreat to Ascalon or even use their superior numbers to envelop the Frankish cavalry and turn the battle around.

The crusader leadership moved quickly to commit their cavalry reserves and followed them up swiftly with the bulk of the infantry, hitting the enemy again before they could recover their balance. Having seen off the threat to the baggage train and the rearguard, Godfrey was able to wheel his troops round and attack the Egyptian army in the flank, while the rest of the Christian forces launched the follow-up charge into the Fatimid centre. 'Duke Godfrey, Count Raymond, Eustace, Tancred, Cono of Montaigu, and his son Lambert,' we are told, 'seeing that the strength of the army of the gentiles was failing, and it was withdrawing, charged on horseback into the midst of the enemy with a violent rush and clamour of the infantry, and by inflicting a very great slaughter upon them they brought very great assistance to their brothers'.[64]

The Frankish heavy cavalry charge into the Muslim lines was squarely aimed at destroying the focal point of the Egyptian command. Guibert of Nogent wrote that:

> Robert, the count of Normandy, saw shining from afar the spear of the leader

> of the [Egyptian] army; it seemed to be covered with bright silver, and its top decorated with thick gold. Steadily spurring his swift horse on, he attacked the prince, who was carrying [the] spear as a standard, with great force, wounding him with [a] terrible blow. On the other side, the count of Flanders loosened his horse's reins and plunged into the thick of the enemy. Tancred rushed among the tents with a great company, and the troops, along with their leaders, were revelling everywhere.[65]

The chroniclers were fixated by the treasure that such standards represented. The real reason for the ferocity of the assault at that point of the line was not plunder, however (though that was always welcome), but rather the desire to incapacitate the Egyptian commanders and their elite units and, in the ensuing panic, bring the battle to a quick conclusion.

But battle is a risky business. Even at this late stage there was still a final chance for the Egyptian army to reverse its fortunes, or at least to gain enough time to permit a more orderly withdrawal. As the Frankish troops overran the Fatimid camp and markets, men took the opportunity to plunder. Discipline began to break down when 'the Christian victors spread out through the tents and camps of the gentiles . . . and they took possession, some seizing precious purple, others clothes and silver vases and a very great heap of both precious metals'.[66] With the infantry dispersed and many of the crusaders' horses blown, it appears that some of the Egyptian cavalry were able to regroup and counter-attack. The mass of the Fatimid regular heavy cavalry were not deployed in the initial stages of the battle and it may well be that some of them tried to rally and counter-charge at this point, using al-Afdal's headquarters at the centre of the camp as their focal point.

Duke Godfrey, still on the left flank of the crusader army ('commanding the furthest lines towards the mountains'), saw the danger and launched another attack on the Fatimid lines. He also managed to rally some of the Christian looters from the rear ranks long enough to bring them back into the fray. This attack, by a mixed force of Frankish cavalry and infantry, rolling up the right flank of the Egyptian counter-attack, also had the effect of making an escape towards Ascalon's main gate, the Jerusalem gate, more difficult, and increasing the choke point for Fatimid fugitives joining the mass of men already running back to the northern, Jaffa gate.[67]

The proximity of Ascalon and its fortifications was potentially a great advantage for the Fatimids. It was strongly defended and for an army withdrawing in anything approximating to good order, it provided refuge and an opportunity to regroup and rally. For an army in rout, however, it also posed grave dangers. The gates acted as funnels: panic was always a strong possibility. The suburban environment around a city such as Ascalon, with its orchards, houses

and walled courtyards, made an orderly withdrawal impossible. All of this was compounded by the battle taking place next to the sea, with the hard flank this provided and the pinch point it created for armoured troops: unable to swim, and unable to get into the city once the crusaders pressed too close by the Jaffa gate.

The Fatimid left wing fared particularly badly, having difficulty in withdrawing into Ascalon as Count Raymond and the southern French pressed forward towards the Jaffa gate. The Egyptians found it difficult to form up in the broken terrain of the orchards on the north side of the city, and quickly routed, taking substantial casualties in the pursuit. Their way through the gate was blocked and many fled across the north of the city towards the sea: 'An infinite number of them, as they withdrew defeated, overwhelmed by the Christians' pursuit, made for ships and shore in the hope of safety and to escape, and there Count Raymond chanced to meet them; he struck at them cruelly and pursued them.' To make matters worse, many of those on the left flank of the Fatimid army drowned while attempting to swim out to their ships, which may have sailed in to try to offer some belated support, or to swim around the walls to the port of Ascalon: 'as they fled to the depths of the sea [Raymond] forced some three thousand by constant weapon blows to be drowned'.[68] Either way, most did not make it.

The crush around the Jaffa gate became intense in the last stages of the battle. Those 'who were taken in at the gate or could be admitted were fortunate. For it is reported that the Saracens suffered so great a crush and lack of space for fleeing and entering through those same doors of the city that two thousand and more of them fell dead in the gateway and in front of the gates, killed and suffocated under the feet of men entering and of horses and mules'. Even allowing for medieval exaggeration, the situation was clearly disastrous. The reference to men being trampled underfoot by horses adds credence to the idea that the cavalry, and particularly the regular, heavy cavalry, were best able to escape, leaving the infantry to their fate.[69]

The centre and left flank of the Egyptian army collapsed. As escape by sea or through the city gates became impossible, entire units were destroyed. Desperation set in. Raymond of Toulouse's troops came across large numbers of Egyptians in what the chroniclers described as the 'extensive and very thick orchards . . . outside the walls'.[70] Fleeing Fatimid troops were able to find temporary safety in the trees, but the Frankish infantry soon flushed them out. As one Muslim source put it, 'the routed troops went and hid themselves in a grove of sycamore trees, which were abundant there. The Franks set fire to a part so that some perished within and those that came out were killed.'[71]

On one level, this sounds very much like the kind of lurid anecdote with which medieval writers loved to spice up their chronicles. Strangely enough, however, Christian writers tell an identical story, so it is almost certainly true. As Albert of Aachen wrote:

> The very last and those slower to escape, seeing here and there the dangers to their lives and the difficult entry of the gates . . . hurried to climb palm trees, and some the branches of olives or figs, so that they could at least hide and be saved by the thickness of the branches and leaves. But the Christian foot soldiers were too close and saw the wretched men in the trees and, once discovered, they suddenly shot them with arrows.[72]

The panic at the gates, the drownings and the desperation of those reduced to seeking sanctuary up small fruit trees, shows just how swiftly and definitively the collapse of the Egyptian army had happened, particularly in its centre and on the trapped left flank. Casualties during the rout were higher because the gates of Ascalon were closed before all the fugitives were inside. One Frankish source wrote that the victory 'was also aided by the fact that, when the cry for retreat spread through the enemy's army, the emir in charge of Ascalon, seeing the [Egyptian] prince turn to flee, ordered that all those who fled should be prevented from entering his city'.[73] It was unfairly claimed that this was to discourage any further retreat on the part of the Fatimid army but it was neither as callous nor as illogical as it appears. In reality it was just a prudent way of ensuring that the city could not be taken by storm during the chaos of defeat.

As commander of the vital garrison town and naval base, the chief responsibility of the Emir of Ascalon was to protect the town, and hence Egypt's strategic interests. If the gates had been open long enough to allow pursuing Franks in, always a real possibility, then Ascalon would have been lost. As it was, Ascalon remained a jumping-off point for the Egyptian armed forces until 1153, absorbing a huge amount of scarce military resource on the part of the Franks and preventing any serious invasion of Egypt until after its fall.

However rational the decision, Egyptian casualties were appalling. As the chronicle of Damascus put it, 'death was meted out to the footmen, volunteers, and townsfolk, about ten thousand souls and the camp was plundered . . . It is said that the number of people of Ascalon who were killed in this campaign – that is to say of the witnesses, men of substance, merchants and youths, exclusive of the regular levies – amounted to two thousand seven hundred souls.'[74] It appears that the Egyptian army was so large and so self-confident that a substantial market had been set up by the townsfolk outside of Ascalon to service their needs. The sudden arrival of the Frankish army meant that the merchants and tradesmen were overrun with the army and suffered enormous casualties. Many of the regular cavalry

were able to get back to Ascalon in time, along with al-Afdal himself, and were under-represented among the casualties. The losses amongst the infantry and the irregulars, however, were dreadful.

The Christian assessment of Muslim casualties was grossly exaggerated but gives a sense of the magnitude of the victory. After the battle Duke Godfrey wrote that more 'than 100,000 [of the enemy] fell beneath the sword, while the panic was so great that up to 2,000 were suffocated in the crush at the city gate. There are no figures, however, for those who drowned at sea. Many were caught in the thickets.'[75]

Frankish casualties were relatively slight. As was generally the case, most wounds were inflicted during the rout rather than in the close combat itself. One source wrote that no 'celebrated men on the Christian side fell in that place, only a few of the crowd of foot soldiers'.[76] The main Egyptian battle standard was dedicated as a war memorial in the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, where it stayed for almost a century, only to be lost when Saladin took the city in 1187. Al-Afdal's sword was also kept as a trophy, having been bought for the enormous sum of 60 bezants from the lucky Frankish soldier who took it.[77]

The victory at Ascalon in 1099 was one of the foundation stones of the new crusader states. Ironically, the battle had been immaculately mistimed by the Fatimid high command. Despite having had two years' notice of crusader intentions, the Egyptian army had arrived too late to save Jerusalem. It was also too late to prevent the Franks from establishing a vital sea link to Europe through the port of Jaffa. But equally, it had launched its invasion just as the Frankish army was about to disperse of its own accord. With the capture of Jerusalem behind them, most of the crusaders were eager to return home. At the time when the Egyptian army was mustering at Ascalon in 1099, the Franks were about to voluntarily disband. It was only the presence of the Egyptians that kept them together.

The Egyptian army carried on the fight for many years to come but it never fully recovered from that day. The simplicity and size of the Frankish army was a key strength. This was a small, intensely hardened army. The commanders could be argumentative prima donnas but, once they were committed, the army was well used to moving cohesively in the face of the enemy and acting decisively. While the Egyptian army had mass, process and administration behind it, these also made it slow. So slow that it became entranced by its own bureaucracy, and too slow to see what was unfolding around it. The Frankish army was largely composed of infantry, and heavy infantry at that. It could not move fast, but even then the Fatimids did not see it coming. A complacent underestimation of the crusaders'

capabilities, coupled with a failure to act on the intelligence reports that were coming in, meant that, despite their numbers and training, the Egyptians were completely surprised. The army of Fatimid Egypt was a well-resourced, professional army, but it was continually undermined by a lack of motivation and a politicised leadership.

The Expeditions into Palestine, 1101–5

In 1099 the systemic problems within the Fatimid military had been compounded by complacency and diplomatic failure: Frankish intentions had been consistently misread, with catastrophic consequences. As a result, the disaster at Ascalon could be explained away as the result of a very particular situation: an event rather than a trend, triggered by a combination of bad luck and poor intelligence. Whilst clearly not the best start to the task of recovering Palestine from the crusaders, this initial failure could be attributed to unique circumstances.

The Fatimid army and navy therefore embarked upon a series of campaigns into the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in the first decade of the twelfth century, with major invasions taking place in 1101, 1102 and 1105, alongside a series of increasingly large-scale raids. The first of these invasions, in the summer of 1101, looked particularly promising.

The First Battle of Ramla, 7 September 1101

Within a few months of the victory at Ascalon, the situation facing the Christians had deteriorated very significantly. One of the members of the army later wrote that they were mystified as to why the Muslims even permitted their state to exist. Baldwin I, who became king after the death of Godfrey in July 1100, faced an almost ridiculously bleak future. There was no army to speak of. A few small and scattered garrisons tried to hold on to Jerusalem, Jaffa and a couple of other settlements. But the field army, the troops available for mobile defence, was little more than a retinue. In total, including garrisons and policing contingents, the kingdom of Jerusalem could at one point muster only 300 cavalry and 300 infantry.[78]

By the summer of 1101 it was clear to the Fatimid military that circumstances were now far more favourable. The spring and autumn sea passages back to Europe had been full of crusaders returning home. The poor performance of the Egyptian cavalry at Ascalon was being addressed by a programme of reforms, and the infantry regiments lost in battle were being replaced.[79]

Once again, the Fatimid army seems to have taken about two months to muster and deploy in southern Palestine. Troops began to

gather in late March or early April. By the end of May the main body of the army had arrived in Ascalon and began sending patrols north towards Jaffa, and eastwards towards Jerusalem. King Baldwin rapidly gathered whatever troops he could and moved down towards Ramla to block any potential Egyptian advance further north.

Neither side marched straight to battle. The Frankish force was too small to confront the Egyptian army directly and they feared being drawn into battle close to Ascalon, where they might be surrounded by the enemy's superior numbers.[80]

The main body of the Fatimid army, perhaps awaiting further reinforcements or, as the crusaders optimistically thought, too nervous to advance, remained in the vicinity of Ascalon. For almost a month (24 May–17 June 1101), the stand-off continued. Some of the Egyptian irregular troops, perhaps disappointed at the lack of plunder, started to drift off. In the case of the Bedouin, it may even be that some of them offered their services to the crusaders. Certainly, Fulcher of Chartres, a participant in many of these events, was well aware of desertions from the Egyptian army, and ascribed at least some of these to supply problems on their side.[81]

The crusader forces were not a regular army, however, and, like many of the Muslim forces, could not be kept in the field indefinitely. Manpower in the kingdom was stretched so thinly that many of the men needed to return to their lands, if only to carry out repairs to the fortifications of the newly captured towns such as Arsuf and Caesarea. For the important Galilean contingent of knights from Tiberias, the need to return to protect the eastern frontiers from the army of Damascus was also pressing. So on 17 June the Frankish army was forced to disperse, first retiring back to Jaffa to resupply and make contingency plans for how best to proceed, and then going their separate ways.[82]

The long-distance stand-off between the Fatimids and the embryonic Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem continued for another two months (roughly from 17 June to 25 August 1101). By the end of the summer Baldwin was back in the capital, when news arrived that the Egyptian army was finally on the move.[83] He mustered his troops around 25 August in Jerusalem, and they then marched down to Jaffa. He garrisoned the port as best he could, trying to create a refuge in the event that things did not go well on the battlefield. Tellingly, the royal family were moved there too.[84] This was certainly prudent, but it was also the action of a commander whose limited forces gave an acute sense of the consequences and likelihood of failure.

As always, it is impossible to be definitive about the size of the opposing armies. On the crusaders' part, it is clear that manpower was short. Short to the point of desperation. Fulcher, who was with the

army when it mustered, said that the urgency of the situation was such that Baldwin required every man who had a squire to make him into a knight, and to arm him accordingly. Even once this was done, however, the numbers were pitiful. It was estimated that the Frankish army consisted of no more than 260 knights and 900 infantry.[85] Contingents from the coastal towns of Caesarea and Haifa were gathered. In the event of disaster all hope clearly rested on the ability of Jaffa to hold out. Duke Godfrey had improved its fortifications shortly before his death and reserves were concentrated there as a final fallback position. It was never fully articulated, but the focus on the ports meant that there was an implicit understanding that a full-scale evacuation back to Europe, or to the northern crusader states, might become necessary. Planning was in place to abandon the entire kingdom.

The size of the Egyptian army is more problematic. Fulcher, who saw the army arrayed, and later experienced it at far closer quarters than he wanted to, estimated that it consisted of 11,000 cavalry and 21,000 infantry.[86] This seems somewhat on the high side, but other Christian sources give even more implausible estimates, ranging from between 40,000 to 200,000 men. The Muslim sources are silent on the size of the Fatimid army, possibly because of embarrassment, given the outcome of the battle. Fulcher's estimate of cavalry numbers is perhaps broadly realistic, as they seem to have taken relatively few casualties at Ascalon. The army was certainly large given that this was their big opportunity to avenge that defeat and retake Palestine before reinforcements for the crusaders could arrive from Europe. Whatever the exact numbers, the Franks were very significantly outnumbered, probably even more than when they faced the Egyptians in 1099.

We are not entirely sure who commanded the Egyptian force. One Muslim chronicler calls him al-Qawwasi, 'the archer', while two others call him al-Tawasi, 'the eunuch' (hardly inspiring but not quite as depressing as it sounds to modern ears: it could also mean 'first class cavalryman' at the time). As we have seen, with an unusual sense of gallows humour, the Damascus chronicle implausibly refers to him as al-Qawamisi ('General Disastrous'). Whatever his name, the Egyptian commander eventually realised that the crusaders were not going to be enticed into attacking him near Ascalon. He blinked first. He realised that he had to do something with the large force he had been given, and was acutely aware that feeding such an army into the autumn and winter was going to pose significant logistical problems, given the limited naval facilities offered by the port of Ascalon. Perhaps the earlier desertions had continued or even worsened.[87]

Either way, the Egyptian army started to move slowly out onto the plains around Ramla at the end of August. On 6 September the

crusader army left Jaffa and marched out towards them.[88] The Fatimids were a substantial force and were not manoeuvring at speed. Maybe they thought that the tiny Frankish army would not want to meet them in the field. Or perhaps, given that their two most likely eventual targets were the cities of Jaffa and Jerusalem, they had heavy siege equipment in the baggage train, slowing down the army as a whole.

Before battle was joined, King Baldwin gave a speech to the troops. Normally, surviving pre-battle speeches from the classical or medieval periods are little more than homilies: the kinds of thing that appeal more to the clerics who write them, or make them up, than to the scared and adrenaline-filled soldiers they are supposed to be aimed at. In this case, however, there is a faint echo of reality in our record of the speech, an attempt to show genuine camaraderie with the men he was leading into battle, and a roughness of style that might ring true. The usual religious exhortations are relatively brief but focused on the things uppermost in men's minds at that moment: if you die, you will be blessed and the Kingdom of Heaven awaits; if you live, you will have everlasting glory. His short speech ended with an all too plausible message from one soldier to another, tinged with a stiff dose of sardonic humour. 'And remember, if you feel like running,' he is reported to have said, 'France is a very long way away.' Fulcher, who was there at the time, dryly commented that after he had finished, 'we all agreed with him'.[89]

The three divisions of cavalry which constituted the front line of the crusader forces charged the centre of the Fatimid army in waves, or at least in echelon. Their impact was hindered by two factors. The Egyptians' superior numbers in the centre enabled them to absorb the initial shock and also meant that they were deployed on a wider frontage, allowing a natural outflanking process to take place once the first impetus of the charge was over. Fulcher describes his dismay at the sheer weight of numbers on the Muslim side and the way in which they 'swarmed' over the Christian cavalry like 'a mass of birds'.[90]

This was the moment when the knights had to justify all their privileges and social status. The first unit of Frankish cavalry was led by a nobleman called Bervold. He and his men crashed into the Fatimid lines but the initial impact was held. Bervold was killed. His contingent was almost wiped out. One knight escaped but even he had lost a hand in the fracas. The second wave charged in, led by Geldemar Carpinel, who had recently been given Haifa and so was presumably leading his retinue and the local contingent. They too were quickly overwhelmed, however, and almost completely destroyed. Geldemar was killed, together with most of his men. Only two knights, named William and Erkengold, managed to escape.[91]

The Galilean contingent was next in, led by their young lord, Hugh of Tiberias. They charged again into the centre of the Egyptian line. Hugh seemed to be making some headway but eventually he and his troops were also ground down. The attack stalled. Unlike the first two waves, Hugh and a few survivors of his division were in a fit state to withdraw as a unit, but they had been severely mauled.[92]

This was the critical point of the battle. The Fatimid centre had been temporarily weakened, but their flanks were still strong and two of the three vanguard units of the Frankish army had been all but wiped out. Baldwin's choice was to either try to gather the remnants of the army together for a fighting retreat back to Jaffa; or to gamble all on a final charge on the centre of the Egyptian line, hoping that it would break and take the rest of the army with it. Baldwin decided on the latter. Higher risk but high reward. And a fighting retreat against an enemy with superior numbers was certainly full of risk too.

The True Cross was in the rear division of the army, carried by a certain Bishop Gerard and an elite guard of ten armoured soldiers. Baldwin paused to make a (presumably extremely brief) confession to the bishop and to take what he probably thought would be his last Holy Communion in front of the True Cross.[93]

He had kept the two last cavalry units with him in reserve. The first of these, the contingent from Jerusalem, were ordered to charge once more into the centre of the Fatimid line, presumably through the wreckage of the three previous Frankish cavalry units. As the Jerusalem contingent began to falter, Baldwin personally led his last remaining cavalry reserve into the fray, a final throw of the dice. In a scene of suspiciously high drama, he rode on his famous charger, Gazelle, towards the leaders of the Egyptian army, hoping, as Alexander the Great had done at Gaugamela and as Robert of Normandy had done at Ascalon, that their death or flight would cause the entire enemy army to collapse.[94]

Baldwin charged at one of the Egyptian commanders and ran him and his horse through with his lance. The blow was so severe, we are told, that the white pennant at the tip of Baldwin's lance lodged in the dying emir's stomach. This all sounds far too choreographed and dramatic to be realistic.[95] And yet, bizarrely, there seems to be an element of truth to all this. Several Muslim accounts mention that al-Qawwasi (or al-Qawamisi, 'General Disastrous') died in the centre of the Egyptian army towards the end of the battle, as he fell from his horse.[96] The death of its commander, coming after the intense fighting between the Egyptian centre and the successive Frankish cavalry charges, was enough to push the core of the Fatimid forces into rout.

There was some pursuit of the defeated Egyptians, even as far as the outskirts of Ascalon.[97] Given the scale of the Frankish casualties,

however, particularly among the knights, much of this pursuit must have been undertaken by the mounted sergeants and other light cavalry while the infantry moved to pick off enemy stragglers on foot, and the walking wounded.

Some apologists for the Fatimid army have tried, unconvincingly, to claim the battle as a draw. The Muslim sources which they use to support this thesis are confused and vague, but even they admit that the Frankish forces crashed into the centre of the Muslim army and killed its commander. After two years' preparation, on ground of their own choosing and with vastly superior numbers, the Fatimid army still failed to beat the Franks.

From a Frankish perspective, it was clearly a strategic success, albeit a hard-won battle on the day. Manpower in the crusader states would never be at such a low point again. Settlers and pilgrims were starting to arrive, and relationships with the local Christian communities were being strengthened. If the Fatimids were ever going to recapture Palestine, this was arguably their best opportunity.

It was also a tactical victory for the crusaders, at least in the technical sense of the term. They had killed the enemy general, routed the main Fatimid army and remained in possession of the field. On the ground, however, it can hardly have felt like that. Of the 260 knights who had started the battle, 80 were dead by its end and few of the survivors were still in a fit state to fight. If wounded are also included (and these are usually more numerous than fatalities in a victorious army, as the wounded are less likely to be killed in the aftermath of battle), the majority of the crusader heavy cavalry must have been casualties.

So, if this was victory, it was clear that the crusaders could not afford too many more like that. On the day itself, as Fulcher said, 'no one knew the outcome of the battle'.[98] But Baldwin would never have been able to disperse his troops for two or three months in the face of a Turkic army: they were far more aggressive and effective than the Fatimid cavalry. With an Egyptian army he felt able to do so. The Franks had eventually prevailed, they had survived, and their military resources would continue to grow.

The Second Battle of Ramla, 17 May, and Jaffa, 27 May 1102

The second battle of Ramla, only a few months later (17 May 1102), showed just how differently things could have gone. The primary problem seems to have been one of poor intelligence on the crusaders' part, combined with an unsustainable level of overconfidence on the part of the king. Whereas the previous two Fatimid campaigns into southern Palestine had been well monitored by the Franks, and their movements contested by aggressive scouting, the invasion of 1102

seems to have come as a complete surprise.

Seemingly unaware of the size or location of the enemy forces, King Baldwin foolishly advanced too close to the Fatimid army with a force of just 200 Frankish knights and little or no infantry support. They were surrounded and almost totally destroyed. Thankfully for the crusaders, however, Baldwin escaped the debacle and the Egyptian military paused for several days to argue about what to do next. This allowed the Franks to muster a small army at Jaffa, and march out to confront them.[99]

The battle was over quickly, and Christian losses were light. Frankish sources claimed that there were 3,000 Egyptian casualties which, allowing for natural exaggeration, hardly sounds like a massacre.[100] The Fatimid cavalry had fled relatively early on, and thus left the battlefield more or less intact as they did at Ascalon three years before, while their infantry, stationed in the centre where the Frankish cavalry charges were focused, and far more vulnerable to pursuing cavalry during a rout, bore the brunt of the casualties.

The battle of Jaffa did not reflect well on the Fatimid army. They had displayed indecisiveness at the highest levels of command. This was commented on even by Muslim sources, and it allowed the crusader armies to regroup and recover. Incoherent strategy in the face of the newly gathered Frankish forces at Jaffa, neither enforcing a close siege, nor retiring to Ascalon, was also unimpressive from a command perspective.

Tactical performance was similarly weak. Despite outnumbering and outflanking the Frankish army, the Fatimids found themselves once more unable to hold the line against an aggressive crusader cavalry charge. That casualties were not higher is attributable more to the early flight of the Egyptian mounted arm and the relatively small numbers of crusader cavalry than to any great tactical skill.

Ultimately, despite the disaster at Ramla a few weeks earlier, the crusaders did not even pay the Egyptians the compliment of trying to develop a new tactical response: they just fought the battle in the same way as before, but this time with the infantry support that should have been there in the first place.

The Third Battle of Ramla, 27 August 1105

In the aftermath of their defeat outside Jaffa, the garrison at Ascalon were reduced to carrying out raids and patrols. These were useful in maintaining morale, but they could only delay the inevitable. By 1105 it was increasingly clear that if the Fatimids were not to abandon Palestine altogether, they would need to act decisively.[101]

The Egyptians certainly knew that they needed to make changes if they wanted to break the pattern of tactical weakness that was

apparent whenever they faced the Franks on the battlefield. The basic issue was that, despite numerical superiority, under most circumstances regular Fatimid troops could not withstand a charge from Frankish knights. Their cavalry on the flanks could not destroy the crusader infantry or baggage train quickly enough to stop the main body of the Egyptian army being routed, and the battle lost.

Their answer to this tactical problem was probably the correct one: try to recruit Turkic mounted archers to envelop the flanks of crusader armies more quickly and aggressively, and to destroy them before the Fatimid centre caved in. But this was easier said than done. The supply of Turkic mercenaries getting down to Egypt had largely dried up since the Egyptians first started fighting the Seljuk Turks in the eleventh century. The results on the battlefield reflected this lack.

Once attempts to establish direct recruitment of Turkic mercenaries had failed, the Fatimid government had to swallow its pride. They approached Turkic-run Damascus to provide mercenary or allied troops for their invasion of southern Palestine in 1102. Although these requests were rejected, by 1105 even the Damascenes were becoming more aware that the crusader states might pose a long-term problem to everyone. Putting their distaste of the Shi'ite regime in Egypt to one side, they were persuaded to provide mounted archers for an invasion of the kingdom of Jerusalem in 1105.

Preparations for the campaign began early in 1105, starting with negotiations with Damascus and the provisioning of the regular army. The mustering process took place in June–July 1105, with the Fatimid regulars and a large force of Bedouin gathering at Ascalon in August, and the Egyptian navy present in support.

This force, numbering about 5,000–10,000 regular cavalry and infantry, plus a similar number of irregular troops, were joined by 1,300 Turkic horse archers under the command of the Damascene general Sabura.[102] The Egyptian infantry are described by the Franks as 'Ethiopians', suggesting, as in previous battles, that they were drawn predominantly from the Black regiments, while the regular cavalry were mainly Armenian or Arab. The crusaders thought they were facing an army approximately 15,000 strong which, including Turkic cavalry and irregulars, may not be too much of an exaggeration.[103]

The first warning of a major attack came when the Fatimid navy began to blockade Jaffa. Realising that this presaged a full-scale invasion by land, Baldwin began to muster his forces at Jaffa, leaving only small garrisons in the other cities.[104] By coincidence, the Franks also had their own Turkic horse archer contingent, showing how local politics and personal interests could cut across seemingly intractable religious lines. These light cavalry were provided by a disgruntled son

of the previous Damascene ruler, eager to get Frankish support so that he could retake what he saw as his inheritance. Though his Turkic contingent was smaller than that provided by the Damascenes for the Egyptian army, it may at least have gone some way towards counteracting the impact of the Fatimids' new Turkic allies.[105]

Baldwin was not going to repeat the secular or spiritual mistakes he had made at Ramla three years earlier: this time he gathered all his resources carefully. Leaving behind a garrison of 300 men, he marched his army out of Jaffa on Friday, 25 August, and moved down to Ramla. He arrived there on Saturday, 26 August, and waited for the arrival of the patriarch of Jerusalem, who was en route with temporal help in the form of 150 extra infantry and the crusaders' spiritual weapon of last resort, the True Cross.[106]

In the meantime, the Fatimid army had moved up from Ascalon, and camped at Ibelin, just a few miles from Ramla. Battle was deferred by the Christians until the following day, to maximise the spiritual benefits of fighting on the Lord's day. On the morning of Sunday, 27 August, the army of the Latin Kingdom received the blessing of the patriarch and celebrated mass with the True Cross. The Franks then advanced towards Ibelin. The Fatimid army, warned by scouts of their approach, likewise set off to meet them halfway.[107]

Baldwin organised the army into five divisions. He himself gathered a force of 160 cavalry and kept them with him as a mounted reserve. Fulcher of Chartres, who may have been with the army and certainly had the chance to discuss the battle with many participants, describes the size of the Frankish forces as being about 500 knights and 2,000 infantry. He also mentions an unspecified number of other mounted troops, which may be a reference to the small contingent of Turkic mounted archers and to the early use of Turcopoles.[108]

After the battle, the Franks came to believe, presumably on the basis of discussions with high-ranking prisoners, that the original Egyptian battle plan had been to move towards Ramla with the smaller part of their forces, thereby pinning the crusader field army. The main Egyptian army, meanwhile, was to proceed towards Jaffa, where it would link up with the Fatimid navy, cut the crusaders' supply lines, and put the city under siege. This was an ambitious plan, probably far too ambitious in light of the recent track record of the Fatimid army, but not entirely irrational given their superiority in numbers.[109] The advance of the crusader army on the morning of 27 August pre-empted any ideas of such strategic sophistication, however, and the two armies met between their respective camps at Ibelin and Ramla.

The sequence of events in the battle itself is confused, though a couple of features seem clear. The Franks charged into the centre of

the Egyptian line in the usual manner, smashing into its leaders, capturing several senior emirs and causing severe casualties to the 'Ethiopian' infantry posted there. The Turkic light cavalry, although only a relatively small part of the Egyptian army, seem to have been disproportionately effective, outflanking and surrounding parts of the crusader army. Tellingly, not only were the Turkic troops described as excellent archers but, once they had finished softening up their Frankish adversaries with missile weapons, they were not afraid to move in with swords and take the fighting to close quarters. It was only the vigorous actions of the reserve cavalry division commanded by King Baldwin himself that kept them at bay long enough for the main body of the Egyptian army to be routed, ensuring that the Turkic cavalry had no option but to break off the engagement.[110]

Casualties on the Egyptian side were heavy, and included the commander of the garrison at Ascalon, Jamal al-Mulk. Although one of al-Afdal's sons was in at least nominal command of the expedition, Jamal al-Mulk and other regular army commanders had a very significant role to play in the leadership of the army. The emirs of Arsuf and Acre were also captured, suggesting that the Egyptian centre had been hit hardest, and had broken.[111]

The religious, ethnic and political factionalism that was rife within the Egyptian army always degraded its cohesion and effectiveness. This was played out to the extreme at the point where decisions were being made as to whether to rally or to rout, whether to opt for fight or flight. Interests quickly diverged. The Sunni Turkic horse archers left the rest of the army and rushed back towards Damascene territory. The Bedouin irregulars, ethnically and culturally distinct from the other groups, were fighting for booty and cash payments: they had little motivation to stay. The Armenian cavalry seem to have fled back to Ascalon. The Black infantry regiments were on their own: slow and isolated, they took the brunt of the casualties.[112]

On the Christian side, losses were significant but not heavy: Albert of Aachen claimed that there were 100 fatalities, with only one eminent knight, Reinard of Verdun, among them. Fulcher of Chartres wrote that there were only 60 killed in the entire Frankish army.[113] Muslim sources, on the other hand, suggested that Christian casualties were of the same order as their own.[114] Given the disproportionate number of casualties that are sustained in the rout phase of a battle, this does not seem likely, though there is no reason to doubt that the battle was intense and bloody for both armies.

The battle was a hard-fought but conclusive defeat for the Egyptian army. Once again, the Fatimid forces seemed to have had everything in place. They had a large naval contingent to support them and to blockade Jaffa. A significant number of high-quality Turkic horse

archers had joined the ranks. They outnumbered their enemy. And they were a well-provisioned regular army, supported by numerous irregular cavalry and volunteers, fighting on a battlefield they knew well. It must have felt as though, despite their every effort, it was still never enough. Morale plummeted. Significantly, this was the last Fatimid field army to enter Palestine for almost two decades.

What went wrong? As always, one gets the impression of an army which lacked energy and coordination at a strategic level, and which did not have the élan to compensate for this on the battlefield. The crusaders, in this as in most of their encounters with the Egyptian army, seem to have held the initiative at the critical points of the battle: disrupting the Egyptian plans to move the majority of their army towards Jaffa, and pinning the centre of their army with repeated and devastating heavy cavalry charges to which they seem to have had little response.

The Turkic mounted archers were a very welcome addition for the Fatimids, but they were merely temporary allies and, given their limited numbers and the presence in the crusader army of other Turkic archers and possibly Turcopoles, they could not make a battle-winning difference. The Fatimids never solved the issue of how to deal with a Frankish heavy cavalry charge. The lack of a solution to this fundamental problem was militarily debilitating.

The Battle of Ibelin, 29 May 1123

The protagonists settled down to sporadic raiding and skirmishing over the next two decades.[115] Even the Fatimids recognised that the failure of their heavy cavalry to meet their crusader counterparts with sufficient élan was at the heart of their military dilemma, and tried to improve their performance by introducing more rigorous training.[116] Cadets were given special instruction in a variety of skills, such as weapons handling and horsemanship. Perhaps correctly, the high command also seemed to feel that part of the cavalry's problem lay in a lack of motivation: most of the regular troops were, of course, Christian or pagan. An element of religious indoctrination was therefore built into the training, part of an attempt to build cohesiveness around a shared belief system, something sadly lacking in an army coming from such diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.[117]

There is no evidence that this had any effect, however, and, if anything, the Fatimid heavy cavalry became less effective and aggressive over time. Its last major battlefield performance against the Franks in 1123 was, as we shall see, even more disappointing than earlier efforts.

The death of al-Afdal in 1121 brought new leadership to power in

Egypt, and plans were put in place for another expedition into southern Palestine. The spring of 1123 provided a last opportunity for the Egyptian army to prove its worth in an offensive capacity. They were aware that a large Venetian crusade was under way. A massive fleet of 120 ships with 15,000 men, including a large German crusader contingent, had overwintered in Corfu and was making its way to the east. Reinforcements for the kingdom of Jerusalem were in sight, and a pre-emptive strike must have seemed an attractive option.[118]

Moreover, the forces of the Latin Kingdom were temporarily divided and preoccupied. King Baldwin II had taken part of the royal army north to help the Principality of Antioch and the County of Edessa. Many of the Franks' best troops were several hundred miles away. Even better, on 18 April, shortly before the Egyptian army was ready to move out from Ascalon, King Baldwin was captured while on campaign. With the royal forces divided and dispirited, the invasion could hardly have been better timed.[119]

The Egyptian army seems to have had, as ever, all the resources and equipment it needed in place. Preparations were thorough. We know that the army was mustered carefully, and that only the best troops were selected for the expedition. These were to be reviewed in a formal parade once they had arrived in Ascalon, to ensure that they were all fully equipped from the government's arsenals and stores. The cavalry were formally paid in the presence of high-ranking officials, doctors were recruited and, as was usual, Bedouin were hired for short-term service. And as with the Franks, spiritual needs were also important for morale among the Muslim elements of the Egyptian army, with prayer readers and muezzins accompanying the troops. But money and an efficient bureaucracy cannot buy élan or strategic sense.[120]

The Egyptians launched a combined arms offensive up the Palestinian coast. One part of the army marched overland from Egypt to Ascalon, while the remainder, together with the heavy supplies and siege equipment, went by sea with the navy and met them there in mid-May.[121] The Fatimid fleet consisted of between forty and eighty ships and sailed north to blockade Jaffa. The army marched up to join it on 23 May 1123, quickly unloading battering rams and large catapults. After a few days of bombardment there was deemed to be sufficient damage done to the walls to allow an assault to take place. Dismounted heavy cavalry led the assault partly due to their better armour, supported by infantry from the Black regiments who carried large shields to protect them from missiles launched from the walls.[122]

The assault was beaten off, but the situation was beginning to look desperate. Frankish sources make a point of stressing that all the male citizens were fighting on the walls, while the women of Jaffa took

rocks and water up to help them. Damage to the battlements was starting to become more and more apparent. The number of defenders was so small that mining operations could not be prevented and were already under way at key points. Just when the siege was beginning to bite, however, the Fatimid army heard reports of a Frankish force approaching. They quickly dismantled their siege engines and took them back to the ships. The field army withdrew towards their favourite battlefield, the plains around Ramla and Ibelin.[123]

On the morning of 29 May 1123, the Frankish army rose at dawn for blessing and absolution. The True Cross accompanied them and gave additional spiritual firepower: Fulcher, who was in Jerusalem at the time, tells us that the religious fervour of the army was echoed in the fasting and devotional activities of the Greek, Syrian and Latin churches within the city. The Frankish army was estimated to be very sizeable by their standards, some 7,000–8,000 strong. It was arranged into divisions and marched off towards Ibelin.[124]

The battle was not the finest hour of the Egyptian military. Seeing the approach of what they must have felt to be an intimidatingly large and aggressive Frankish army, the cavalry units panicked and fled without a fight. The attempts to reform and improve the training of the mounted arm, set in place after previous defeats, had failed to deliver any results: their performance at Ibelin in 1123 was worse than ever. The Black regiments, who constituted most of the infantry, were deserted and massacred in the ensuing rout. Fatimid casualties were high, with chroniclers suggesting figures in the range of 7,000–8,000 from an estimated total army strength of 16,000. Regardless of the accuracy of the total figures, the losses taken by fleeing infantry in enemy territory would inevitably be savage.[125]

To put the final nail in the coffin of the expedition, the Venetian fleet arrived and pursued the Fatimid navy down to Ascalon. Once there, it enticed the Egyptian squadron into battle by sending a few weak ships ahead as bait, and destroyed them when they emerged. The Venetians continued their voyage, sailing down into Egyptian waters. There they captured another ten Fatimid ships, which had not received word of the retreat from Jaffa or the disaster at Ibelin, and were heading up towards Ascalon with further siege equipment and supplies.[126]

The final Fatimid invasion of Palestine ended as a parody of its earlier performances. The Black infantry were unsupported and undervalued. The cavalry were unwilling to connect with their Frankish counterparts. Poor coordination between army and navy remained the norm. And a sense of strong strategic leadership was as elusive as ever.

Generally Disastrous

How should we judge the Fatimid army? On the positive side, it certainly had enormous resources relative to other local states in the early decades of the twelfth century. It had the size, discipline and substance to keep the Fatimid administration in power, at least during the first half of the century, and that was its primary function. Given that the rulers of Egypt were always potentially isolated in terms of their religion and ethnicity, this was no mean feat. Similarly, when defending coastal cities, the Fatimid army and navy, acting in a coordinated way, could perform well.

On the offensive, however, or even acting defensively on the battlefield, the Fatimid military never delivered its full promise. It fulfilled its political functions well, but that very politicisation tended to hinder its effectiveness. Different units and different arms were deliberately divided by religion or ethnicity, in the traditional manner of military dictatorships, seeking to play one faction off against another. This factionalism was always a major barrier to success. Armenian Christian cavalry, for instance, although inextricably bound to the regime and its success, were hardly fanatically devoted. Irregular units, similarly, must on occasion have felt only marginally linked into the army as a whole, and this was reflected in their behaviour. The army was always a collection of parts rather than a well-engineered whole.

Politicisation also had a negative impact on strategy and leadership. Indecision and the effects of cronyism were often apparent. The army could be ‘professional’ on a good day, but it always felt rather uninspired. The presence of supposedly ‘elite’ units that rarely left the confines of the palace tells the broader story of a military structure sapped by intrigue and politics.[127]

Poor command-and-control structures were the norm. These problems stemmed from the top. Al-Afdal distrusted his own officer corps, and sought to ensure that none of his military subordinates was ever powerful enough to overthrow him. Command was divided, and coordination and operational leadership inevitably suffered. For similar reasons, there was never any permanent or long-term professional leadership based in Palestine, so the war against the Franks was always waged in a disjointed manner. With commanders chosen for their political and familial loyalties, strategy, decision-making and planning were bound to suffer.

The Black regiments, largely Christian or pagan, were, if anything, even more disengaged from the society they were employed to protect. What seems to have been a pervasive racial prejudice against the Black slave regiments of the army had more than just unpleasant social consequences. The extent of overt colour prejudice is hard to

gauge, but, as we have seen, they were consistently given the lower-status roles. Tellingly, no soldier from a Black regiment was ever promoted into the upper echelons of the regime, irrespective of talent, while other ethnic groups were given the opportunities they were denied.[128]

Beyond a lack of career opportunities, this prejudice also seems to have significantly undermined the battlefield effectiveness of the Fatimid army in this period. Time after time we find the (mainly African) Egyptian infantry being deserted by the (mainly non-African) cavalry. Any innate tendency towards poor coordination in the face of the enemy was exacerbated by the debilitating rivalry between different elements of the army, often finding expression along racial lines. Regularly deserted on the battlefield, despised by their generals, the surprising thing is that the Black infantry fought as well as they did, and this speaks well of their professional pride.[129]

The inability of the Fatimid field army to face the Franks in battle, even with numbers on their side, inevitably imposed severe limitations on the strategic options available to the Egyptian high command. These options were limited still further as the crusaders gradually captured each of the Palestinian coastal cities. Being left with Ascalon as their last remaining foothold in the region, the Fatimid army could never achieve tactical surprise and could only operate aggressively when the attention of the main crusader field army was focused elsewhere. Ascalon itself was too hemmed in by crusader pressure to be able to support a large army for long, so supplies for any expeditionary force would need to be brought in by sea. And even shipping in those supplies created its own problems, as the town never possessed a good port. Having lost the strategic initiative to the crusaders, and unable to match them on a tactical level, it was hard to see how the Fatimids could develop a winning formula.[130]

By the 1150s and 1160s Egypt was on the defensive, caught between enemies, each more aggressive and better focused than itself: the crusaders on the one hand, and the Turkic-dominated Syrian states on the other. During the course of a series of invasions (1163, 1164, 1167, 1168 and 1169), Muslim and Christian chroniclers alike barely mention the Fatimid military. Two armies, the Franks and the Turks, each superbly effective in their own very different ways, were fighting for control of the resources of Egypt. The Fatimid army was reduced to the role of bystander, or ineffectual policeman, trying to pursue its own political interests but, as we shall see, ultimately left to the mercy of the victors.

CHAPTER 9

War with Turks and Syrians

THE OUTCOME OF THE First Crusade was always implausible. But it was this disunity that made it possible. Islam may have been the Muslim Syria was deeply fragmented when the crusaders arrived, and ‘brand’ that most of the key players within the region subscribed to, but the depth of their brand loyalty differed wildly. Spiritual affiliations were often subordinated to the far more tangible attractions of personal and dynastic power.

There were deep political, ethnic and religious differences within the Islamic states of the region. Most of the local potentates and warlords were of Turkic origin, nomadic tribesmen from the Eurasian steppes. For them, Islam was a new religion and for many, a religion of convenience: the belief system of those they had conquered, rather than one of deep conviction.

Like the Muslim Egyptian armies, whose soldiers were largely neither Muslim nor Egyptian, the ‘Syrian’ armies of the twelfth century were full of foreigners. The crusades were never really ‘Christians’ versus ‘Arabs’. The Arab states of Syria had been beaten long before the crusaders arrived. Paradoxically, and in parallel to the Christian armies they fought, the Muslim armies were not mainly drawn from the local Syrian Arab communities. They were generally ethnically and linguistically distinct, mercenaries of nomadic heritage and warlords attracted from outside the region by the rewards on offer. Many of the local Arab or Syrian communities regarded the Turkic newcomers as unwelcome and uncouth barbarians.[1]

When the Franks arrived on the First Crusade, nomadic-heritage rulers and their soldiers were running almost all of Syria. Crucially, and happily for the crusaders, they were running it as a series of personal fiefs, with each warlord worrying as much about his Turkic competitors as about the new entrants to the region. Further south, Turkic adventurers had been fighting the more sedentary Fatimid Egyptian government for control of Palestine. In this they had failed,

for the moment at least, but they had once again helped to create a disordered and decentralised environment, a vacuum in which the crusaders could prosper.

Map 10 The Principality of Antioch
Source: After Barber 2012, p. xvi and Hamilton 1980, p. 393.

By the end of the thirteenth century, every major state in the region, Muslim and Christian alike, had been taken over by individuals and dynasties that had their origins on the steppes, backed

up by armies that had ethnic and social roots in nomadic cultures and practices. This dynamic, the increasing influence of nomadic-heritage families and their military in the region, inevitably affected the composition of Syrian Muslim armies and the way they operated.[2]

One would expect such nomadic-heritage armies to look and feel quite different from those of more settled societies. They would generally include large numbers of light cavalry archers, mounted on small, highly manoeuvrable horses. Their social elites might be armoured, and more capable of close-quarters combat, and they would have access to some infantry, both from among their own society and from their subject peoples. But the core of their power would be the horse archers and the tactical mobility that allowed them to disrupt their enemy's lines, softening them up for close combat when they were already half-broken. Operationally, that same mobility also allowed deep and fast raids into enemy territory, and greater opportunities to avoid combat under unfavourable circumstances.

Perhaps most importantly of all, however, was the underlying quality of the men which the steppes produced. Life there was hard and punishing, and it produced men who were natural warriors. Some of the less subtle 'martial' qualities (aggression, disinhibition with regard to violence, and so on) tend to be artificially suppressed in sedentary societies, in order to increase social cohesiveness, and hence productivity. Military skills are 'outsourced' to a smaller group, who are trained to employ systematic violence on behalf of society as a whole. For over a thousand years, back to the early days of the Roman empire and beyond, most of the population of Syria, Palestine and Egypt had effectively been demilitarised.

Nomadic societies have no such clear boundaries between military and civil functions, and far fewer artificial training programmes are needed to hone their martial skills. Quasi-military skills are at the core of much of what makes an effective nomadic society and are easily transferable. These were hard men and, with the right leadership, they could be almost seamlessly turned into a restless but formidable military machine.[3]

The Armies

The core of the armies of the Turkic-Syrian states that the crusaders faced when they arrived in the Holy Land consisted of two main elements, both of which were composed of nomadic or nomadic-heritage cavalry: the more regular 'askar forces that were more permanently available, and the groups of mercenary light cavalry that might be engaged to help them from time to time.

The 'askar were the nearest equivalent to the standing armies of each state. They consisted largely of Turkic or, to a lesser extent,

Kurdish soldiers, and were primarily professional cavalry, equipped both for close-order fighting and as mounted archers. Although the men tended to be of nomadic origin, with a heritage founded in the skills of the steppes, they were mostly second-generation recruits, supporting Turkic regimes that were increasingly at home among their sedentary subjects and the economic surpluses they produced. Over the course of the twelfth century, resources became available to upgrade the ‘askar, partly in terms of numbers, but also in terms of equipment and tactical deployment. These men were trained professionals, with the military skills of their ancestors, but combined with greater discipline and better capabilities for close combat than their tribalised cousins.[4]

By Frankish standards, they were also available in relatively large numbers. Mosul, for instance, supported an ‘askar of just over 6,000 cavalrymen by the 1170s.[5] This was much larger than average, with most cities having a standing cavalry contingent in the order of perhaps some 1,000–2,000 men available at any given time, but even this should be seen in the context of the small armies of the period: as we have seen, the combined feudal knightly contingents of all four crusader states consisted, in theory at least, of no more than 1,200 men for most of the twelfth century.

Turkic soldiers, even in the ‘askar, were often rough warriors, however, particularly those who had recently left the steppes. At best, they were tolerated by the Arab townsfolk of Syria and Iraq as a necessary evil. At worst, they were seen as a solution that was scarcely better than the problem. They had a different cultural background. They looked different, wandering around town with their hair in long plaits or intimidating dreadlocks.[6] And they spoke a different language. The habits of the steppes died hard. Post-combat exuberance often expressed itself through the scalping or beheading of prisoners. But they were the best available troops and they were the soldiers that the Turkic rulers of the Syrian city states could rely on. If they were alienated from the townsfolk, their interests would be all the more firmly aligned with those of their employers.[7]

The majority of Turkic cavalry were skilled light horse archers, but there was always an elite, even in tribalised groups, who were relatively heavily armoured and better able to come to close quarters with spear and mace, sword and javelin. Not surprisingly, in the more formally equipped and trained ‘askar the proportion of better armoured warriors tended to be greater than among the tribal Turcomans. As the century progressed, it also appears that somewhat different forms of archery were introduced. The heavier, ‘askar cavalry gradually adopted the technique of firing volleys by unit from slow-moving or even stationary horses, in the traditional Middle Eastern

style. The Turcoman cavalry, however, first-generation nomadic recruits operating in looser mercenary groups, continued to use the steppe technique of high-mobility harassment.[8]

The gradual shift towards a 'heavier' battlefield role for the 'askar was a natural reaction to the crusaders' superiority in terms of heavy cavalry and the opportunities this gave them to end a battle, even when outnumbered, through sheer shock of impact.[9] The Muslims never achieved parity with the Franks in this, but as the century wore on they became increasingly well equipped and trained to meet a Christian charge.[10]

The tribalised Turkic troops were often described as 'Turcomans' or 'wild' Turks to distinguish them from their more settled cousins, and were employed as mercenaries for specific campaigns, either in small groups or as entire tribal units. These men were hard, effective soldiers and available, for short periods at least, in far greater numbers than the professional cavalry of the 'askar. They were also ill-disciplined, prone to distraction by the prospect of plunder, and hard to keep in the field for any extended period of time. They were even less popular with the local population than the 'askar. When Zengi recruited Turcoman cavalry in large numbers around Aleppo, for instance, they were so distrusted that they were forced to camp outside the city, and only allowed inside in the event of imminent danger.[11]

The problems associated with nomads were often outweighed by their two main advantages: they were excellent warriors, and there were a lot of them. We need to have some perspective on this. The larger estimates used by contemporary chroniclers are often exaggerations, partly because large, round numbers are impressive, and partly as a reflection of their battlefield effectiveness and the fear this engendered among their enemies. But there were many nomadic warriors drifting into the region and, just as importantly, they were easy to replace: the steppes provided an almost inexhaustible supply of high-quality military manpower.

Usama provides a good insight into just how many such warriors were seeking employment at any given point in time. In 1150 he was sent on a diplomatic mission to Nur al-Din on behalf of the Fatimid Egyptian government to try to make an alliance or, failing that, to get access to some Turkic mercenaries. Nur al-Din refused to send any significant help, but agreed to provide a troop of thirty cavalrymen as a gesture of goodwill, and granted permission for Usama to recruit among the scrapings of the nomadic mercenaries in the vicinity who had been 'rejected for service' in his army. Within a relatively short period of time Usama had recruited no fewer than 860 cavalrymen. The implications of this anecdote are rarely commented upon, but are

striking nonetheless: in just this area, at this particular time, there were almost a thousand nomadic warriors readily available for hire, even after the vast majority had already been absorbed into the armies of Nur al-Din and local competitors.[12] This was a luxury the crusader states never had access to.

It is hard to be too precise about the warriors who worked their way down from the steppes onto the frontiers and war zones of the Middle East. They could come as relatively discrete tribal groups, with their own agenda, but also with their own internal cohesion. Others might be smaller groups of mercenaries, detached from the nomadic lifestyle and picking up strays and 'volunteers' as their adventures took them across the region. There were no organisational charts, no hard-and-fast rules. Like a dystopian biker gang, when the Turcomans attacked Fatimid Egypt in the mid-eleventh century, they were described as including Turkic troops (obviously), but also 'Greeks' (presumably Byzantine volunteers or prisoners), Armenians, Anatolians and Arabs. Bizarrely, and there was no obvious reason to make this up, there were even some 'Germans', perhaps European mercenaries or prisoners captured while in Byzantine employ. Many Turkic groups, and particularly the smaller bands, defied neat ethnic labels.[13]

The Kurds were another source of military manpower. They were from the regions west and south of the Caspian Sea and had a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle, migrating with their animals from season to season along traditional paths. Like many other nomad groups, they had begun to filter into northern Syria during the course of the eleventh century.[14] Unlike the Turkic troops, with whom they often seem to have quarrelled, the Kurds were famed for their swordsmanship and, although it is hard to be definitive, this perhaps indicates that they were somewhat more comfortable about entering into hand-to-hand combat than their Turkic rivals.[15] They certainly grew in influence as the twelfth century progressed (Saladin himself was a Kurd) but were less numerous than the Turkic elements of a Syrian army.

Nomadic warriors tended to operate as light cavalry, highly skilled archers riding large numbers of small ponies. Mobility was at the core of their approach to warfare, much as it was to their life as herdsmen on the steppes: the enemy could be rounded up and harried, herded in the direction they wanted to move them in.[16] This mobility was reflected in the nature of their weapons and equipment: lighter than that of their Frankish enemies, and more orientated towards long-distance combat. As one Christian contemporary wrote:

> the Turks were not weighed down with armour like our people, and because they were more lightly armed they were often able to inflict much greater

> damage and injury on our people. The Turks are almost unarmed, only carrying a bow and a club bristling with sharp teeth [i.e. a mace], and a sword; they also have a reedy spear with an iron tip and a light dagger. If they are hotly pursued a long way they flee on very fast horses. There are none nimbler in the world, with the swiftest gallop – like the flight of swallows.[17]

The Franks were thought to be strangely cautious in warfare, but that caution had been learned at huge cost. Turkic cavalry could turn and pretend to be routed or retreating at any point, before wheeling round and inflicting casualties on their disorganised pursuers: 'more quickly than can be imagined they turn now their faces and now their backs to those opposing them, suddenly fleeing in pretence of despair and then quickly returning to attack again'.[18]

In the asymmetrical warfare that characterised the interactions between sedentary societies and nomads, the disciplined battle lines of the Franks were an essential response to the tactics of their Turkic opponents. Fulcher of Chartres saw them in action several times and commented that 'these [Turkic] people, since they ... characteristically never remain long in any one place ... have not trained themselves to fight confined to any certain area, but entirely avoid an encounter, and flee as if defeated'.[19]

The 'feigned retreat' was characteristic of Turkic fighting, but it was only part of their approach to warfare. Their superior mobility gave them opportunities to surround their enemies, disorientating them, and hitting where they were weakest, particularly on the flanks and in the rear. Anna Comnena reflected the views of the Byzantine military when she described their tactics:

> the Turkish battle line differs from that of other peoples. It was not arranged ... shield to shield, helmet to helmet, man to man, but their right and left wings and their centre form separate groups with the ranks cut off, as it were, from one another; whenever an attack is made on right or left, the centre springs into action leaving all the rest of the army behind it, in an onslaught that throws the opponent into confusion like a whirlwind.[20]

Archery could be concentrated on particular points of the enemy line, or used to wear them down gradually, causing casualties and trying to provoke opponents into rash actions as they tried to stop the harassment: 'they do not fight with lances but completely surround the enemy and shoot at him with arrows; they also defend themselves with arrows at a distance. In hot pursuit the Turk makes prisoners by using his bow; in flight he overwhelms his pursuer with arrows.'[21]

The Turkic-Syrian armies of the region had many strengths. They generally had numbers on their side. They had high levels of mobility, and were able to use this to outmanoeuvre their enemies and to inflict cumulative casualties through archery fire. They had the ability to

conduct feigned retreats, goading the enemy into rash pursuit which might break their cohesion, coupled with the potential to surround their opponents and exploit any weaknesses in their flanks or rear. And they combined all this with an often surprising willingness to come to close quarters once the enemy had been sufficiently worn down. They were highly effective warriors, and crusading armies quickly learned to treat them with respect.

But they were not superhuman. The logistical support required to keep light horse archers supplied with arrows over any extended period was always difficult to maintain. The high mobility needed to herd the enemy and evade counter-charges also required access to a huge number of horses and these were more readily available on the grazing lands of the steppes than they were in the Middle East.[22]

It is always easy to underestimate the problems faced by Turkic light cavalry. The crusaders were perennially frustrated by their non-committal tactics, the tip-and-run provocations and the steady drip of cumulative casualties, particularly among the precious Frankish heavy cavalry horses. But if the process of engagement took place over an extended period, the nomadic cavalry could find it every bit as frustrating. Horses, their precious movable goods, became tired or, even worse, were wounded or killed by Frankish crossbowmen. And particularly for troops beyond the core ‘askar, who had no prospect of a regular salary and whose motivation was more about plunder than piety, this was not a style of warfare that had long-term appeal. If the enemy refused to break formation, morale would suffer and desertions became inevitable. Their battlefield strengths were real but could not be sustained indefinitely.[23]

Nomads had very specific interests of their own, and keeping these interests aligned with those of their employers was never easy. They were good men for a raid, for ravaging the countryside or for a battle where rich pickings might be in prospect, but they were not going to hang around indefinitely. They were capricious, independent and generally keen to return to their homes once their plunder sacks were full.[24]

After their disastrous defeat at the battle of Harran in 1104, for instance, much of the Frankish army was able to escape, even though they were in disarray and far inside enemy territory. Their retreat was partly made possible by a simultaneous breakdown in discipline in the Muslim ranks. Many of the Turkic cavalry were preoccupied with plundering the Christian camp, and taking prisoners to the rear, for slavery or ransom.[25] The main reason why the crusaders disengaged so successfully, however, was that different Turkic groups soon turned on each other. Fighting almost broke out in the Muslim ranks on the night of the battle, as arguments raged about the ownership of

prisoners. Pursuit of the Frankish army was put on hold as commanders were forced to return to re-establish order.[26] The desire for plunder was such that open warfare between different Turkic groups, or between Turks and Kurds, was always a distinct possibility.

Large groups or tribes of Turkic nomads were always tactically dangerous but rarely strategically fatal. Their cavalry were superb when well handled but mercenary groups were inevitably difficult to keep in the field, whether disheartened by defeat or satiated by victory. They were intimidating on the battlefield, and rightly inspired fear in their enemies, but as long as their Frankish opponents maintained good discipline, they could be contained.

The states that used them also had their limitations, particularly in the early part of the twelfth century. Individually, they each had only a relatively small standing army, and their political fractiousness made long-term military alliances extremely difficult to maintain. The ‘askar of each city was limited in number, and although they could be boosted by local infantry or auxiliaries on certain occasions, this was more often for defensive actions than for anything more aggressive: the urban militia could be well motivated in a siege, but the further away from town they went, the more limited their availability and usefulness. The only other way to boost numbers and military effectiveness significantly was to hire in Turkic mercenaries. But flooding an area with these extremely dangerous warriors was never easy or without risk. They were expensive, volatile and hard to control: bringing them into the region often just meant replacing one problem with another. Until a greater degree of unity was established among the Muslim states of Syria, the resources available to each of the individual Turkic regimes made definitive action against the crusaders extremely difficult.

The Battle of Tell Danith, 14 September 1115

There were many battles between the Franks and Turkic-Syrian armies. We are extremely fortunate that detailed accounts of two of the most important encounters have survived, written by someone who was not only a participant but who had taken an active role in the planning of each battle. His accounts show just how dangerous Turkic bands could be. These were armies of extraordinary violence, elemental and ferocious even by the standards of the time, but by no means easy to wield as an instrument of policy: armies with huge tactical strengths if used well, but with equally profound strategic limitations.[27]

In 1115 the sultan of Baghdad was trying to create a unified Muslim front against the Franks. He was faced with the usual problems. The major Muslim states in the region, such as Aleppo and

Damascus, tended (entirely correctly) to see Baghdad as just as much of a threat to their independence as the Franks. In February 1115, Bursuq, the lord of Hamadhan, was chosen to lead Baghdad's expeditionary force into the region, with a thankless brief: to try to kick the local Muslims into line and lead them in a war to destroy the Christian states.[28]

The local Muslims, and particularly the Damascenes under their Turkic overlord, Tughtigin, had other ideas, and did not greet this call to arms with enthusiasm. On the contrary, when Bursuq led his army into the region, the Damascenes formed an alliance with Prince Roger of Antioch to work against the sultan's general. The armies of the other Frankish states also mustered together in the north to form an uneasy alliance with Damascus against the invaders.[29]

Bursuq withdrew in the face of this formidable force and waited long enough for the allied troops to disperse. Then, when it was difficult for them to reassemble quickly, he invaded the Principality of Antioch in strength. This presented Prince Roger with the traditional problem facing Frankish commanders: whether to act or to wait. A large Muslim force was loose within his lands, capable of inflicting massive damage on towns and castles that had already been devastated by earthquakes the previous year. Ma'arrat-an-Nu'man was captured. The important Christian castle of Kafartab was put under siege and eventually fell on 5 September 1115. Roger could ask for help from his allies again, and await their arrival, with Bursuq destroying large swathes of the frontier. Or he could move on his own to try to stem the invasion.

He chose the latter course. Strategy and caution suggested the prudence of waiting for reinforcements, but the emotional cost of doing so, and the loss of prestige it entailed, was immense. Roger and his nobles preferred to meet Bursuq on the field of battle, rather than suffer the humiliation of seeing their lands ravaged and their people killed.

We know the size of the Christian forces with some degree of certainty. They consisted of the field army of Antioch, together with the smaller allied army of the County of Edessa, commanded by Baldwin of Bourcq. Walter the Chancellor, who was present at the muster, wrote that the Antiochene and Edessan component of the allied forces that had gathered at Apamea earlier in the summer to face Bursuq's initial invasion were good-quality troops, but had numbered no more than 2,000 men.[30]

Other sources, both Muslim and Christian, suggest that greater efforts had been taken to boost the numbers of the second muster in September, and that it eventually consisted of some 500–700 cavalry and 2,000 infantry 'of all kinds, Franks and Armenians alike'. Much of

the cavalry seem to have been Turcopoles, so the local Christians would have formed a very large part of the army as a whole.[31]

Descriptions of the Muslim army are vaguer. Bursuq had sufficient subsidies from Baghdad to make him a popular employer and, as well as the mercenaries that this allowed him to employ, he had brought large contingents from the Jazira and Mosul. A significant Turkic contingent from Sinjar was present, under their Emir Tamirek, whom Bursuq seems to have placed in charge of most of the Muslim cavalry on the day of the battle. Under duress, the city state of Mardin had also provided a company of soldiers, led by their emir's son, acting in the uncomfortable dual capacity of sub-commander and hostage.[32] Shaizar was another more or less willing ally. They certainly provided troops for the expedition, with separate detachments from Shaizar being present at both the siege of Kafartab and at the battle of Tell Danith.[33] But even they were wary. Although Bursuq was allowed to camp nearby, he and his men were not allowed into Shaizar itself.

Altogether, Ibn al-Athir suggests that Bursuq had an army of some 15,000 men available for his invasion, although we know that the separation of various detachments, for instance to Kafartab and Buza'a, had reduced their numbers by the time the battle took place.[34] One Christian source suggested that Bursuq had a total of 8,000 men with him at Tell Danith, perhaps excluding the usual 'volunteers' and non-combatants: this sounds plausible, given the casualties that the army took on the day, and is not necessarily at odds with Ibn al-Athir's assessment.[35]

The Christians had mustered at Rugia, just east of the Orontes river. Panic-stricken reports were coming in from the local communities that Turkic troops were back in the region. On 13 September the army of Antioch and Edessa set off in column of march along the road to Hab, where Bursuq and his army were thought to be. There was inevitably some nervousness in the ranks. The expectation was that they would encounter the Turkic army later that day. They had not waited for reinforcements from Tripoli or Jerusalem, and they knew that they would be heavily outnumbered. The column moved quickly, to try to keep the initiative. Light cavalry detachments were flung out in front of the army and on the flanks, to ensure that maximum warning was received of the enemy's presence.[36]

It was an anticlimax. The reports of the immediate whereabouts of the Muslim army had proved false. Perhaps it was Turkic raiding or foraging parties that had caused the local villagers to panic. Either way, the march to battle proved fruitless, and once the army reached Hab, they camped for an uncomfortable night's sleep outside the small Frankish fortified settlement there.[37]

The army rose early on the morning of 14 September. The scouts had been on patrol throughout the night. We know that most of the light cavalry, certainly among the rank and file, were local Christians, Syrians or Armenians, but there were probably also some Turkic mercenaries, as translators were needed to verify their intelligence reports. A few months earlier, for instance, Antiochene scouts had returned from Muslim territory to report on Bursuq's plans and preparations for war. Roger wanted to interview them in person, but could only do so with the aid of an interpreter.[38]

The reconnaissance detachments that had headed north were commanded by a Frank, however, Theoderic of Barneville, a Norman knight whose family had settled in Sicily and had joined in the First Crusade.[39] When Theoderic returned he could barely contain his excitement. He and his men had scouted up into the Sarmin valley, a fertile area with good water supplies and well known to the Franks, to ensure that it was a safe position for the army to make camp later in the day. When they got there, however, the Antiochene scouts found that the Muslims were already starting to camp around the springs. Crucially, Bursuq's army were not only unaware of the proximity of the Franks, but they had not yet fully mustered in the valley: part of the army was there, but other detachments were arriving piecemeal. Some tents were already pitched, but others were yet to be set up. Roger was elated but knew that he needed to act quickly. He jumped on his horse and rode to each of the army's sub-commanders for discussions, urging the men to get their weapons ready and prepare for battle as soon as possible.[40]

The army, like all armies of this period, was deeply religious. Spiritual preparations were just as important as the sharpening of swords or the adjustment of battle lines. The troops had received mass earlier in the morning, with William, bishop of Jabala, conducting the service and delivering what seems to have been an appropriately militaristic sermon. 'In that very place', we are told, 'the renowned bishop, bearing in a spirit of humility the Cross of holy wood in his reverend hands, circled the whole army; and while he showed it to all of them he affirmed that they would claim victory in the coming battle through its virtue, if they charged the enemy with resolute heart and fought trusting Lord Jesus.'[41]

With the religious inspiration completed, it was time for more secular morale boosting. It was always going to be difficult to compete with the True Cross, or even a fragment of it, but Roger made a good, soldierly attempt. His speech in the approach to the battle of Tell Danith was recorded in some detail. The army was small and the speech could have been heard by most of the men. It was not flowery or particularly clever, but its simplicity makes it all the more credible.

This was a young leader talking to a group of hardened veterans, each potentially looking death in the face.

He started by reminding them how important it was that their actions as men should be remembered with honour. He then followed up with the comfort that any who died in the battle ahead would have been fighting for a just cause and would be well received by the Lord. More practically, and probably in much more comfortable territory, he ended up by telling them to charge in with the lance but then to get stuck into hand-to-hand combat with swords. He could give them no certainties, but he could talk of honour, consolation and, most importantly, instructions for battle.[42]

Before the army set off, there were still things to do. Stronger detachments of light cavalry were sent out along the road to the Sarmin valley, to ensure that the situation had not changed and that the Franks would not be entering a trap. Once they had been sent off, the order of march was decided. This was more than just a formality, because the order of march would determine the order of deployment on the field. The army of Edessa, commanded by Count Baldwin of Bourcq, was given the honour of the vanguard. Although smaller than the Antiochene forces, the Edessans were veterans of numerous campaigns against Turkic raiders, and were trusted to launch the initial attack.[43]

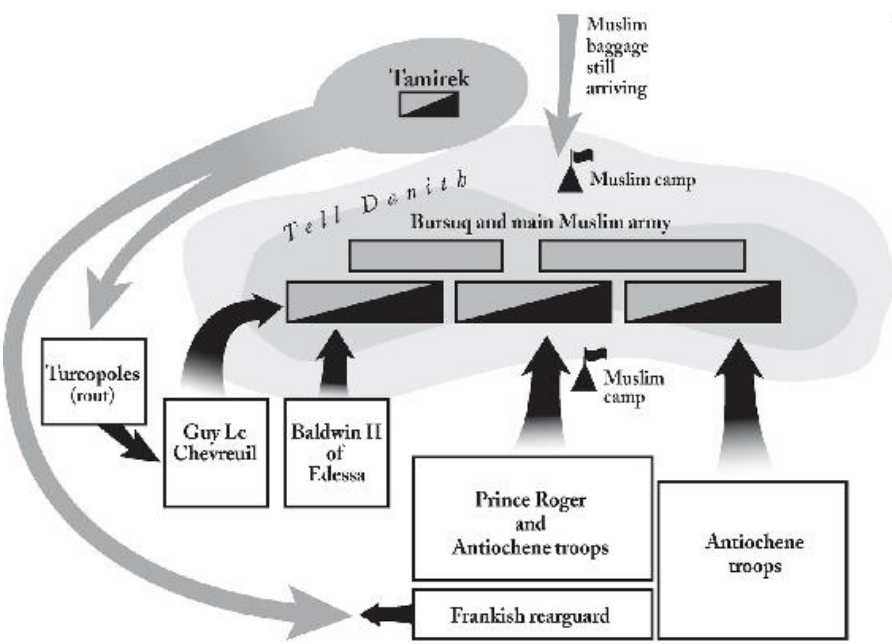
Finally, Roger personally rode up and down the army to emphasise the need for discipline with regard to plunder. If anyone paused to start collecting booty in the middle of the battle, he promised that the punishments would be severe. The customary sentence for disobedience in the Antiochene army at this time seems to have been blinding, something picked up from their frequent interactions with the Byzantine army to the north of the principality.[44] As if that was not enough, Bishop William also went to each unit to reinforce Roger's edict: he emphasised the threats of physical punishment which would accompany disobedience by plundering, but culprits would also be condemned, 'he assured them, to suffer eternal damnation'.[45]

This was not as excessive as it might seem. Plunder was an essential part of any medieval campaign, and a great motivator for the men. In this instance, however, the scouts were reporting that much of the enemy camp was at the end of the valley closest to the Franks, and that Bursuq's troops were gradually filtering into the valley from the other end. Plundering normally took place towards the end of a battle, as a routing enemy fled to the rear through their baggage train and camp. In this case, with the Muslim camp in front of their main army, the Franks were going to be offered plenty of plundering opportunities before the battle had been decided. If discipline broke down at that point, disaster would be inevitable. The Franks would hopefully have

surprise on their side, but were also heavily outnumbered: once battle began, Bursuq's troops could be given no opportunity to regroup and rally.

As the Franks entered the valley, the Muslim forces were entirely unprepared. Foraging parties were still out. The camp was only half set up, with further troops and supplies gradually filtering through. And a significant body of Turkic troops had left the army to occupy Buza'a.[46] To make matters worse, Bursuq misinterpreted what he saw taking place in front of the camp, and instead of pulling his troops back to form a defensive line, began to send men forward to capture what he thought were Frankish scouts. It was only when the Antiochene banners came into sight that Bursuq realised that he was facing the field army of the northern Franks. Perhaps convinced that Prince Roger would wait for reinforcements before trying to intercept him, as he had done before, Bursuq had split his forces, marched his troops without proper discipline, and, above all, had failed to grasp even an approximate sense of the location of the Frankish army.[47]

He withdrew his main line back through the camp, trying to use his heavier troops to form an impromptu defensive position on the hill of Tell Danith. The main body of Turkic horse archers, who would need mobility if they were to be used to best effect, were pulled back behind the hill under the command of the Emir Tamirek of Sinjar, with orders to outflank and surround the Franks once they were fully committed to their front.[48]



Plan 7 The Battle of Tell Danith, 1115

Source: WC, pp. 100–6.

The Franks deployed across the valley floor, facing the Muslim camp, with Tell Danith behind it. The Edessan army was the vanguard division, holding the left of the Frankish line, and split into three main units. The Turcopole light cavalry archers were deployed on the far left. A unit of knights and other troops, including a Cilician contingent led by Guy Le Chevreuil, one of Antioch's leading noblemen, was posted on the left with orders to move up to attack Tell Danith from its flank. The core of the Edessan army, led by Count Baldwin himself, were positioned to charge frontally to the left of the hill.[49]

The main Antiochene army was split into two divisions, in the centre and right of the line, each echeloned behind the other, and with the central division commanded by Prince Roger himself. Having the divisions drawn back had the advantage of providing a reserve and rearguard if needed (always important when facing large numbers of nomadic horse archers) while at the same time positioning them to launch a direct attack on Bursuq's troops on Tell Danith when the moment was right.

The first Frankish attacks were launched in a staggered way, across the Muslim front and progressing from left to right. The Turcopoles moved forward on the far left, to try to prevent the Christian army being outflanked. The Cilicians and Baldwin of Bourcq's Edessans moved through the wreckage of the hastily abandoned camp and tore on up into the left of Tell Danith. The initial charge inflicted some damage on Bursuq's defence lines on the hill, but once the first shock of impact was over, lances were shattered or discarded, and the fighting settled down to the close combat of sword and shield. The Franks began to carve their way through the Muslim lines: 'recovering their strength . . . they put the enemy to flight, hacked them to pieces and killed them'.[50]

Once the Frankish heavy cavalry were fully committed on the left, the Turkic cavalry to the rear of Tell Danith launched their attack. This was well timed. With the Frankish troops on the left already occupied, they attacked the Frankish light cavalry and 'at a swifter pace they caused the Turcopoles, who were shooting arrows at them, to be swallowed up among our men'.[51] The Turcopoles fled before Tamirek's men could connect with them, retreating back towards the army's centre and the relative safety of the Christian infantry. In fact, there was little else they could do. Heavily outnumbered, and probably outclassed as well, their position on the left could only hope at best to slow down the Turkic advance, and buy additional time for the Frankish heavy troops in the centre to do their work.

Tamirek's troops then began to sweep round behind the Christian main lines, bypassing the Cilician and Edessan units. The Christian

chronicles were correct in suggesting that the Turkic cavalry had diverted around the Frankish divisions on the left for sound military reasons, as 'they did not dare to attack it, and they could not use a constant bombardment of arrows to disrupt the charge'.[52] Charging unbroken Frankish knights at close quarters was never going to play to their strengths.

Indeed, probably as was always intended, they continued to move towards the rear of the Christian centre, attempting to disrupt their all-important heavy cavalry charge in other parts of the line. They were gradually engaged by men from the Antiochene divisions. The first troops they faced were those of Robert fitz-Fulk, probably in Prince Roger's central division, who turned to face them with his men. The Turkic cavalry met them as the Frankish troops were 'advancing from the right, head on'.[53]

Robert, known to his more literally minded friends as 'Robert the Leper', led a powerful contingent from his frontier lands in Zardana, the major castle of Saone and the nearby town of Balatanos.[54] The fighting in the centre was fierce. One of the casualties was Robert Sourdeval, from a Sicilian Norman family, who had had a distinguished career working with Prince Roger. He and his men charged into the oncoming Turkic troops and were surrounded. The reins of his horse were cut during the fighting and he was brought down by Turkic archers. His men were completely routed.[55]

Robert fitz-Fulk survived, helped by the swift arrival of reinforcements from the Frankish right. The tough frontier contingent from al-Atharib, led by their lord Alan, and troops from Harim, commanded by Guy Fresnel, rushed to contain the Muslim light cavalry and succeeded in neutralising the threat they posed to the rear of the Christian army.[56]

Tamirek's men had done the best they could under the circumstances. But as long as the Franks held their nerve they could do little more than distract. Prince Roger committed his reserves to cope with the light cavalry to his rear and remained focused on the tactical priority: the destruction of the core of Bursuq's army on Tell Danith in front of his battle line. He gave the order to charge, and the central division crashed into the Muslim troops on the hill in front of them. The Frankish division on the right flank followed almost immediately. The charge was particularly aimed at Bursuq and his retainers, as Roger's men 'assailed the enemy in wondrous manner wherever they saw the mass was densest'. Desperate attempts were made to try to stop the Frankish cavalry charge with archery, but with no success. The knights carried on through the hail of arrows and hurled themselves onto the centre of Bursuq's forces. The Muslim army, already reeling from Baldwin of Bourcq's assault on the left,

collapsed almost immediately. The rout began and Bursuq's troops 'at first resisted for a little while, then suddenly fled'.[57]

As the Muslim forces broke and ran, the detritus of their baggage train slowed down their pursuers for a short while. As Walter the Chancellor later wrote, the ground was 'partly covered by dead bodies, partly crammed by a mass of camels and other animals laden with riches, which were a hindrance to killing for our men, and a help to escape for those fleeing'. The Turcopoles, having been humiliated by the Turkic cavalry earlier in the day, were now unleashed to maximise the damage to the retreating army. The initial pursuit continued beyond the town of Sarmin, with the Christian cavalry 'running them through, wounding them and killing them'.[58]

Some of the fleeing Muslim troops spread out across the countryside, and tried to hide in nearby villages, only to find themselves attacked by the local farmers. The villagers, who had been terrorised by the Turkic raiders over the previous days, took their revenge in full. An additional operation by the Frankish cavalry and light troops was put in place over the next couple of days to round up the Muslim stragglers dispersed in the area.[59]

Muslim casualties were high, reflecting the scale of the defeat in their centre and the punishing nature of the pursuit. One Frankish chronicle estimated that 'three thousand Turks were killed, and many captured. Those who escaped death saved themselves by flight. They lost their tents in which were found much money and property. The value of the money was estimated at 300,000 bezants. The Turks abandoned there our people whom they had captured, Franks as well as Syrians, and their own wives and maid-servants.'[60]

Roger remained on the field of victory for two or three days after the battle, so the army could regroup and tend to its wounded. Discipline about the distribution of booty was vitally important at this stage, in order to ensure the continued motivation of the cavalry detachments which were still in pursuit of enemy stragglers. Pursuit after defeat was the most important opportunity to inflict casualties on an enemy army. If the pursuing troops, and particularly the cavalry, thought that their share of the plunder would be gone before they returned, this chance would be lost. He delayed the division of spoils for three days to ensure a fair distribution of the plunder and as suitable encouragement for the mopping-up operation, and he 'personally directed the wealth which was brought to him to be kept for him . . . the rest was to be shared out, as his sovereignty and the custom of that same court demanded'.[61]

Usama was part of the Muslim garrison at the recently captured castle of Kafartab when the battle took place, but left an account of the personal loss his family had sustained on the field. His father, who

had been with Bursuq at Tell Danith, came back having 'had all his tents, camels, mules, baggage and furniture taken from him'.[62] Hearing of Bursuq's defeat, Usama and his comrades killed the Christian prisoners they had taken ten days earlier and set off back to Shaizar.[63]

The leaders of the Muslim army seem to have left the battlefield with embarrassing speed, leaving their men behind. Despite the large number of casualties, 'the army lost no commander nor even any well-known personage'.[64] Bursuq's personal performance on the day was so poor that elaborate excuses were made for him. Ibn al-Athir suggested, implausibly, that he wanted to take part in the fighting but was prevented by the 'camp-followers and pages' who surrounded him. Bursuq died the following year 'full of remorse for this defeat'.[65] He had commanded a polyglot force, some of whom were there more or less unwillingly. But he had also split his forces in the face of the enemy and, despite the large numbers of light cavalry at his disposal, had remained ignorant of his enemy's intentions or location. The element of surprise was reflected in the casualties his men suffered, and in the large number of prisoners taken.

The young Prince Roger had much to be pleased with. His men had been heavily outnumbered but the cohesiveness of the army in attack and the heavy weight of a Frankish charge had won the day and inflicted massive damage on the Muslim force. There were lessons to be learned, however, and lessons are taught more compellingly by defeat than by victory.

Too much had been asked of the Turcopoles. They were extremely useful light cavalry, important for a wide range of tasks. They made a major contribution to the Frankish success through their role as scouts in the run-up to the battle and in the pursuit that took place afterwards. But although they were horse archers, it was too risky to expect them to face large numbers of Turkic troops on their own. The nomads were the experts, living the role in a way that more regular troops could never achieve. And there were always more of them. Outnumbered and outclassed, the Turcopoles could not be expected to hold a flank on their own.

The other lesson was far more important but also more counterintuitive. Roger and his nobles could logically deduce from their victory that a well-led Franco-Armenian army, even when outnumbered, could face an enemy invasion on its own: it did not need to wait for reinforcements. Instead of holding back, and watching its people being slaughtered and its towns destroyed, such an army could see off an invading force on its own. The beguiling quality of this 'lesson' was, of course, that it was partially true. On a good day, in good circumstances, and with the enemy commanded by

someone who was more of a diplomat than a battlefield general, this could all be true.

The risks, however, were far less apparent. And the risks of open combat under less than ideal conditions were always greater for the Franks than the potential benefits. At best, victory would inflict some casualties on the enemy and bring an invasion to a halt. But the casualties never amounted to very much. Muslim commanders were rarely killed or captured: they had good horses and tended not to fight in the front line. There was an almost limitless number of Turkic tribesmen, waiting to be tempted off the steppes by the lure of the plunder. A major victory might gain respite for a year, possibly two, but little more than that.

The consequences of defeat in battle against nomadic armies, on the other hand, were huge. The Christians were always outnumbered, and their ability to replace highly skilled and heavily armoured warriors was extremely limited. Frankish commanders often needed to fight in the front line, in order to maximise their chances of success. In the event of defeat, casualties among the infantry, harried remorselessly by Muslim light cavalry, could be catastrophic. Vital garrisons would already have been stripped back to create the field army and give it a chance of victory: if the field army was lost, then town after town, castle after castle, would fall. Where a Muslim defeat might be a temporary setback, a similar defeat for the Franks, if fully exploited, could lead to virtual annihilation.

Victory felt good, but for Roger and his men, the battle of Tell Danith was the medieval equivalent of a schoolboy placing winning bets on his first day at the races: satisfying but dangerously deceptive.

The Battle of Ager Sanguinis, 28 June 1119

The campaign that ended in the battle of Ager Sanguinis, only four years later, was thus born out of Frankish strength rather than weakness. It was the complacency and overconfidence of that strength which caused the Antiochene army to behave in a way which broke with the established norms of crusader campaigning. The protocols were clear: muster locally to restrict the enemy's movements, call for reinforcements from the other Christian states and behave cautiously until help arrived. In the meantime, wait for the Muslim forces to make a mistake or hope that they would be forced to retire as their irregular troops lost heart in the absence of easy plunder.[66]

The strength of the initial position arose from the pressure Prince Roger of Antioch and his frontier barons had been exerting on Aleppo. There was always a struggle between Aleppo and Antioch to control the crucial frontier zone which separated them. Aleppo is approximately 90km to the east of Antioch. The two cities were linked

by an ancient Roman road but the ‘natural’ mid-way frontier point between the two is characterised by a series of difficult hills, the Jabal Talat: the major settlements and fortifications in the region had naturally formed to the east and west of this difficult terrain.

To the west of the Jabal Talat lay the settlements of Artah, ‘Imm and Harim, all under Frankish control. The other potential ‘natural’ border was only 30km from Aleppo itself. By 1119 this eastern frontier zone was largely in Christian hands too. Frankish forces were based in Sarmada and were in control of other key points, having taken al-Atharib and Zardana in 1111. Disturbingly for the local Muslim states, Prince Roger and his frontier lords were using this position of strength to try to encircle Aleppo. In 1118 even the important town of ‘Azaz, to the north of Aleppo, was surrendered to them.

In subsequent negotiations the Aleppans were forced to hand over lands to the north and east to the Antiochenes, and to reinstate the protection money they paid, in the form of a monthly tribute, to the Franks. But even that was not enough. Early in 1119 the Franks managed to capture the town of Buza’a, to the north-east of Aleppo. The Franks were leaving the Aleppans with very few options. Their city was almost surrounded. It was increasingly clear that Frankish intentions to capture Aleppo could no longer be contained by conventional means.[67]

The Aleppans were facing a dilemma with two possible solutions, neither of which was very attractive to their ruling class. On the one hand, as the Franks were clearly looking for more than a mere tributary relationship with Aleppo, the city could accept the inevitable and surrender to Antioch. There was still a large Christian minority in Aleppo itself, and in the surrounding countryside, so this outcome would not have been universally unpalatable to many of the ordinary people. On the other hand, to avoid surrender to the Christians, Aleppo could give up its independence in return for massive military aid from a Muslim power with access to bigger and better Turkic armies. This solution was not ideal. For most of the Aleppan population, Turkic rulers and their troops were just as foreign as the Franks.

But they were largely Muslim, as were the ruling class of Aleppo and the majority of the townsfolk. Faced with no better choice, the Aleppans called for help from the Turkic warlord, Il-Ghazi. Unstable, unpredictable, sadistic and borderline alcoholic, Il-Ghazi was never going to be an ideal candidate for the role of ‘white knight’. But the Aleppans were desperate and he was the least bad option under the circumstances.

Il-Ghazi raised an army that was spectacular in its size and

ferocity. Sources talk of 20,000–80,000 steppe warriors, supplemented by the local 'askars, mercenaries and volunteers.[68] This was an extremely powerful force, fast, numerous and very dangerous: hard men inured to a hard and often violent life. All nomadic armies were fragile and volatile too, however, and here Il-Ghazi's numbers counted against him. This vast force needed booty and fodder, and in huge quantities. If they did not get these, and if they were not led to towns they could plunder, his army would quickly begin to disperse. They were formidable fighters, but their lack of discipline and the fact that most were fighting a long way from home meant that they needed to be used quickly.

To face them, Prince Roger had a good solid core of veteran troops, spearheaded by his superb heavy cavalry. Efforts had been made to increase the number of available troops but there were still far too few men. Walter the Chancellor, who was not only with the army but also had a hand in organising it, estimated that the Antiochene army consisted of 700 knights, and 3,000 foot soldiers, together with 'many others who had gone to battle for the sake of pay or on account of greed for enemy wealth'.[69]

We know from later events that there was a substantial body of Turcopoles with the army, and in other battles these could constitute as much as 50 per cent of the total cavalry force. A local Syrian chronicler suggested that the Antiochene cavalry force consisted of 'six hundred Frankish cavalry [and] five hundred Armenian cavalry', which gives an interesting sense of the proportions.[70]

Whatever the exact details, it is clear that Roger had the field army of the principality with him and that his main striking force was a good-quality cadre of some 3,000–4,000 men, drawn broadly equally from Frankish feudal troops and local Christians. To boost the size of the army without totally denuding his castles, he had had to scrape the barrel, and had recruited possibly the same number again of untrained volunteers and scavengers. This was a substantial force by crusader standards, but the numbers were deceptive.

They were still hugely outnumbered by Il-Ghazi's force, probably by about three to one, or more, although they almost certainly did not fully understand this at the time: crusader estimates of the size of the Muslim army were only written after the enormity of the defeat became apparent. The large number of 'volunteers' that Roger had brought with him would make the army look more intimidating from a distance, and might be useful for activities such as foraging, but their value in a pitched battle was highly questionable, and could even be counter-productive if they panicked and fled through the more experienced units of the army.

At first, things went well for the Franks. Roger mustered his army

and moved across the Orontes at the Iron Bridge. They then moved down to Balat, near Sarmada, and made camp. Up to this point everything was going according to the normal Frankish defensive protocols. Messengers were sent to ask the other crusader states for help. A suitable forward camp was established, close enough to Il-Ghazi to inhibit the movement of his army, and to intimidate his foraging parties. The camp was not perfect from the point of view of provisions, but it was good enough, and preparations were immediately made to ensure that its natural defences were improved. Walter the Chancellor, who was with the army at the time, explicitly says that 'some of our men were sent to fortify the camp outside'.[71] Roger and his men could sit out the Turkic onslaught, prepare for the arrival of reinforcements and wait, perhaps for a few weeks or a couple of months, until the Muslim army dispersed.

This situation was not ideal. It never was. The invaders would have time to lay waste the frontier, destroying crops, killing and capturing peasants. But it was just as problematic for Il-Ghazi. If he could not give his troops access to plentiful booty (and that meant destroying armies and towns, rather than just local villages that were already operating barely above subsistence level) he would lose his men. And it could be several years before he might gather such a host again.

He knew that he needed to provoke the Franks into action. On 26 June, Il-Ghazi moved his men to besiege the important castle of al-Atharib. The Franks believed this was primarily a feint to draw them away from their relatively well-defended position at Balat, and this was to some extent echoed in the accounts of the Muslim chroniclers. An attack on al-Atharib was a predictable but powerful incentive for the Christian forces to leave camp. The Muslim attack was made in force, however, and it may be that what the Christians thought to be a diversion was in fact a real attempt to capture it.[72]

From Il-Ghazi's perspective it was probably a bit of both. If the Franks refused to take the bait, he stood to capture one of the main fortifications threatening Aleppo: a major victory for his campaign and a significant setback to the Frankish frontiers. If they came to the town's aid, he might have an opportunity to attack them on the difficult approaches to the town, outnumbered and off-guard.

Roger was still responding cautiously at this stage. Rather than break camp and send his whole army off to al-Atharib, he sent a detachment to its relief. The troops set off on the night of 26–27 June and, as they needed to move fast, it was primarily a cavalry force. They presumably had orders to liaise with the garrison, move in to help with the defence if the siege looked serious or, if circumstances permitted, to try to coordinate an attack on Il-Ghazi's forces.

Arriving at first light, the young commanders of the crusading

forces decided that a coordinated attack on the besieging army from two sides might drive them off or, at the very least, delay preparations for the siege. The Muslim army 'suddenly saw the knights of al-Atharib and a band of infantry of that castle and certain of our men, who had come there by night, arriving close by in the manner of defenders as if to challenge them to battle'.[73]

Walter the Chancellor was present when the leader of the reinforcements and his household knights returned to the camp, and told the waiting leaders of the action at al-Atharib. He was able to give us a uniquely detailed account of how the fighting had developed.

The infantry from the garrison came out first and formed a defensive line.[74] An initial charge by the Frankish knights started well and the shock of impact inflicted heavy casualties on the more lightly armed Turkic troops: 'Our men . . . drew their shields close to their sides, brandished their lances, sank in their spurs . . . and charged into the middle of the enemy. Dealing violent blows in knightly fashion they cast some down to the ground, some again, with blood pouring forth, they drove down . . . with fatal wounds.'[75]

A knight called Robert of Vieux-Pont seems to have led the attack by the reinforcements from the field army. We know that he was already a seasoned fighter, having campaigned against Mawdud in previous invasions, and was a member of a renowned Sicilian Norman family whose ancestors had fought alongside William the Conqueror. He was famous, even in the west, as an 'indefatigable soldier who often raided the gentiles' lands with his military following'.[76]

Although the initial impact caused the Turkic troops to recoil, their greater numbers and mobility meant that the shock was eventually absorbed. Lances, used to best effect in the opening seconds of a charge, were dropped as the fighting came to closer quarters, degenerating into a mêlée where swords were more useful. The Frankish troops quickly got bogged down, and Robert himself was wounded and unhorsed. As Walter wrote, during 'these skirmishes Robert of Vieux-Pont . . . charged many of them as they rode in troops and struck them, and at once, after he had broken his lance on one of them he drew his sword and struck others of them again, and only when he himself had been struck in return by many, and his horse pierced by many different weapons, did he fall, brought down by irresistible force'. His men managed to get to him before he was completely overwhelmed, however, and got him another horse.[77]

While Robert's knights retreated and regrouped behind the infantry, the Muslim cavalry likewise recovered and formed up again. Some of the Turkic cavalry, presumably those more heavily armoured, prepared to charge the Christian ranks before they could regroup, no

doubt helped in this by their lighter cavalry moving in to outflank and potentially surround the small Christian force. The Frankish cavalry did not want to be caught stationary by an enemy attack, as the initial shock of their momentum was the major advantage of a knightly charge. Robert managed to reform his men just in time and launched a counter-charge.[78]

Casualties were heavy on both sides and, once again, the fighting quickly deteriorated into a series of small mêlées, with knots of soldiers fighting around their comrades. Robert, as ever, was leading from the front. He was once again unhorsed and 'he hit the ground protected by his shield, and . . . escaped death'.[79] The Frankish garrison troops also charged and counter-charged, led by their young lord, Alan of al-Atharib. Described as a 'youth' in 1115, he was probably still in his late teens at this point, but was keen to lead his men into battle.[80]

The fighting outside al-Atharib was eventually called off. The Frankish infantry remained on the defensive, creating a line behind which the knights could be protected from enemy archery prior to a charge, and behind which they could regroup if the charge failed to break the enemy. The essentially passive but vital nature of their role was widely recognised, despite their social inferiority. Ironically, although their actions were less glamorous than those of the knights, and certainly largely ignored as they made their 'after-battle reports', the infantry component of the garrison seems to have suffered the most casualties, particularly from the archery of the Turkic horse archers as they became separated from the knights in the course of the two charges: 'the poor are believed to have been hurt by the least more than the rich by the greatest'.[81] That is, the infantry suffered more casualties from the 'least' of the Muslim army, the lighter armed horse archers, while the relatively well-protected knights took fewer casualties from the heavier cavalry that they contacted in their charges.

The garrison and the wounded eventually withdrew back into al-Atharib while others 'returned to the army' to report on the action and to give Roger more information about the enemy's movements and likely intentions.[82] In fact, the battle reports of Robert of Vieux-Pont and his seemingly successful attacks on Il-Ghazi's troops outside al-Atharib may have been at the root of the disaster that lay ahead. The fighters were almost all young. The garrison commander was probably a teenager. And they were keen for glory and the opportunity to demonstrate their prowess.

Until Robert and his troops returned on the evening of 27 June, the Frankish army had been safely encamped in the traditional way, in a semi-fortified position with good access to water. It was not entirely

comfortable: the ravages of the invaders were galling for the frontier lords and their men, and food supplies were not over-abundant. But the army was safe, its presence was restricting the enemy's ability to manoeuvre and substantial reinforcements were on the way from the other crusader states. Il-Ghazi could not keep such a huge army in the field for long. All Roger and his men had to do was to be patient and the crisis would pass.

But patience is not a young man's virtue, and particularly not a young knight's. Walter the Chancellor was there when Robert's men returned to camp and began to tell their stories of the action to the prince and his courtiers. The drinking and bragging inevitably began. The knights could not contain their snobbish exuberance, and stressed that it was the hereditary knights, rather than the paid soldiers of the garrison, who had performed best. Their 'post-match' analysis emphasised that 'it was not the hangers-on, but the true-born knights ['naturales milites'] who by dealing blows and overthrowing the enemy were all of them kept busy . . .'[83]

They 'reported to the courtiers that the deeds of the past day had brought honour to their knighthood; as a consequence, as is the fixed habit of knights, everyone lamented who had not been there'. This was an army of confident, probably overconfident, young men, looking for a fight. Everyone was elated to see how easily a small Frankish force had been able to 'defeat' a Turkic army. They all wanted a piece of the glory that was to be had by doing so again the next day. The frontier lords naturally argued to protect their own lands, but they were pushing at an open door. Only the clerics, led by the patriarch, advocated caution. Roger and the army were having none of it.[84]

Although the reports from Robert of Vieux-Pont and his knights spoke of victory and an easily intimidated enemy, Il-Ghazi's withdrawal from al-Atharib was probably a calculated move on his part. Hoping that the Frankish army would march to al-Atharib the following day, he used the opportunity to disengage his troops and send them on wide outflanking manoeuvres to the east and west of the likely Frankish line of march. Robert's troops and the garrison of al-Atharib would be unable to follow such movements as they regrouped after the fighting. Il-Ghazi's massive light cavalry forces were easily able to mask the manoeuvre. If Il-Ghazi was correct, the Christian army would be walking into a trap.

The Franks were almost certainly still unaware of the sheer scale of the forces they were facing and the most optimistic view of the day's events was that the pressure was now off. The Muslim troops were behaving like a raiding party, albeit an exceptionally large one, rather than an army of conquest. The withdrawal from al-Atharib may have

convinced Roger that Il-Ghazi and his men were more interested in easy plunder than a full-scale battle.

The fighting at al-Atharib had been fierce but it had at least demonstrated an appropriately aggressive spirit and, so Roger thought, kept the besiegers off balance. He was keen to keep the pressure up. Walter records that at the planning meeting of the Antiochene leadership on the night of 27 June, the prince said that they should 'march to al-Atharib tomorrow, and approach nearby, for if they should come, the knights . . . will not fear the host of the heathen . . . and if they don't come, we may take counsel on the following day [i.e. 29 June] and turn our march against their tents'.[85] It is clear that, although he was heavily outnumbered, Roger thought he had the upper hand and held the strategic initiative. He was keen to move towards al-Atharib to meet the Muslim troops in battle on Thursday, 28 June or, if they fell back, to pursue them and attack them as they retreated.[86]

Walter took a note of Roger's orders. He was probably involved in writing them down in full, and conveying them to the different divisional commanders. The main army was to move quickly to al-Atharib at first light the next day and camp there for the night. At that point, depending on information about the enemy's movements, further decisions could be made about how to proceed. Preparations for the march were quickly put in place, 'and they chose that same night to send both cavalry and infantry to [al-Atharib], and decided that first thing in the morning [of 28 June] Mauger of Hauteville was to sortie with forty knights beyond the district and to direct ten knights as scouts to the tower situated on the top of the hill so that if the enemy should approach al-Atharib once more, it might be announced to the prince by way of a swift horse and a shrewd knight'.[87]

These orders look sensible, at least on the surface. But there were serious problems. The core of the problem was a lack of intelligence about the enemy. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the very large numbers of light cavalry which Il-Ghazi could deploy, Frankish long-range scouting was extremely limited.

The Turcopoles were the first units roused in the morning, so there could be some scouting ahead of the army, but only in its immediate vicinity and along the route of march as the Frankish light cavalry were still based in the camp at this stage. Similarly, Mauger of Hauteville's mission was sensible as far as it went but was also limited in its nature. Mauger came with a good fighting heritage from the eminent de Hauteville family in Italy. With a force of forty knights, perhaps accompanied by a number of auxiliary cavalry, maybe some eighty men in total, this was essentially a small advance force of

medium and heavy troops, rather than a swarm of skirmishers gathering intelligence about the enemy's numbers and movements. Mauger's main role was probably to trigger prematurely any ambushes that might be set along the Franks' proposed line of march. With a force of that size, the expectation must have been that he had enough men to fight his way out and withdraw in good order to warn the army.[88]

Similarly, the small force of knights which Roger despatched to a tower in order to watch out for hostile activity was a prudent step but, given the scale of the enemy he was facing, entirely insufficient. We know that the tower itself was not far forward, because Roger stopped in there while he was still out hunting at first light.[89] The Franks had some tactical and operational sense of the enemy's movements, but on a more strategic level they were almost completely blind-sided.

Before Roger and Walter finally went to bed there were other arrangements to be made, and more orders to be issued. In an interesting insight into the way in which medieval marches were planned and orders transmitted, Walter and some of Roger's other men stayed up long into the night to organise the following day's order of march and dispositions. After the nobles and their men had been sent back to get what sleep they could, 'the prince called the household [his equivalent of staff officers] and ordered that what had been decided should be brought to its intended conclusion speedily, and he showed them what and where and how it should be done'. Even after the household had finished their tasks, Roger and Walter worked on through the night, trying to finalise plans. As Walter dryly put it, Roger 'secretly called his chancellor and settled with him what should properly be done for the business in hand about those things which seemed burdensome to the warriors'.[90]

But there was a sense of foreboding in the air. Roger ordered that all 'the precious vessels and all burdensome goods should be taken away by night to the tower of Artah'. He tried to appear confident to his men, but in private he knew that there could be trouble ahead. By sending the valuables and most of the baggage train back to Artah, rather than bringing them with the army to the stronghold of al-Atharib, Roger showed he was marching in full expectation that he could be facing a fight. He wanted to move fast and he knew the terrain could be difficult in places. He did not want to have to worry about a slow-moving baggage train, while at the same time trying to prepare for a pitched battle or avoid springing an ambush.[91]

Walter may have got almost no sleep, but the rest of the army was also up before dawn. While the Turcopoles mounted and set out, the others gathered for communion and blessing. Word had been sent the previous night 'to all the army that they should all come together to

the chapel [i.e. the portable shrine that accompanied the army]', where they could hear mass and receive Holy Communion to prepare them spiritually before they entered into combat.[92]

Roger himself made confession with Archbishop Peter of Apamea and gave alms to the poor, purifying himself for the fight ahead. While the army adjusted its equipment and gradually set off, Roger and his household knights found time for a little hunting, taking out his 'small hounds' and falcons, ostentatiously relaxed in front of his men, to calm their pre-battle nerves, but also taking the opportunity to get a sense of the terrain along the line of march.[93]

The route they took, and the battlefield itself, echoed the same limitations of intelligence gathering within the Frankish army. Roger was prudent enough to ensure that he maintained a good sense of his army's immediate environment. There were no local or tactical surprises. But the mass of enemy light cavalry masking Il-Ghazi's movement ensured that the Franks remained unclear about the scale of the army they faced, or its strategic deployment. This was no narrow or wooded valley, where the Franks could be beguiled into an ambush. Such terrain would hinder the largely cavalry-based Muslim army almost as much as the Antiochenes. On the contrary, the Frankish line of march to al-Atharib was through an open plain, surrounded by hills.[94]

The element of strategic surprise lay in the way in which Il-Ghazi had been able to deploy his forces. These were split into three main bodies, any one of which was probably equal in size to the entire Christian army. But it was not just about numbers. Each of these divisions had been able to scout and advance down routes through the hills that the Christians thought impassable to cavalry. When the trap was sprung, there was little tactical surprise but the Antiochene army found itself outnumbered, surrounded and outmanoeuvred, in an open space with no immediate reinforcements to hand and no castle or fortified camp close by where they could take refuge.

Roger's preparations the night before showed just how uneasy he was. He had to hide his feelings from the men, but Walter noticed how anxious he was. Afterwards he wrote that Roger's 'future appeared before him'. Filled with foreboding, Roger brought his hunting to an abrupt close, and decided to visit the hilltop tower where he had sent the ten knights to act as a scouting party the previous night. As he was leaving it, however, 'a messenger came up to him who had ridden at great speed'. Roger's uneasiness was not helped by the messenger's panic. The Frankish scout reported that he had seen 'enemy hordes all over the mountain slopes and inaccessible valleys'. There were Muslim cavalry in places 'not even accessible to the tracks of wild beasts'.[95]

The sense of danger was palpable. Roger was told that the Muslims

were ‘approaching us quickly from three directions . . . and . . . that innumerable columns, distinguished both by standards and by other displays of cyphers, are following the first ones’.[96] The scout was entirely correct. The Aleppan chronicle of Kamal al-Din gives an uncannily similar account of what was happening, writing that ‘as dawn broke they saw the Muslim standards advancing to surround them completely’.[97]

Roger and his men had believed the sides of the plain could not be negotiated by large groups of cavalry and ‘were convinced that no one could get to them because the access was so difficult’.[98] They thought the Muslim army, whose size they probably underestimated significantly, would continue to withdraw from al-Atharib in search of easier plunder elsewhere. Or that, if they did want a fight, they would move towards the Franks, and meet them headlong on their line of march.

They were wrong on every count. Instead they found themselves surrounded on three sides, with the vanguard of the highly mobile Muslim forces advancing on them at speed. Il-Ghazi had ‘set out towards them and his men entered [the area] by the three routes [through the mountains, and] . . . before they were aware of it, the Muslim advance guard was upon them’.[99] The speed of the Muslim approach meant that orders for deployment needed to be transmitted quickly. Everyone was uneasy. The tension of the decision-making made it difficult to keep the army confident and calm. Everyone knew something was wrong. Things were moving far too fast.

Two bugle sounds were established as the initial commands: the first for the final fitting of arms and equipment, the second for forming up into battle lines. At the sound of a third bugle, the main lines, vanguard, centre and rear, were told to advance, with each unit marching behind its standard bearer. They were ordered to form up in battle formation using the portable shrine, which seems to have been with Roger in the central battle line, as their main point of alignment.[100]

But the situation was so fluid that Roger had difficulty in keeping up with changing circumstances. Another jittery messenger arrived while the first scout was still being debriefed. The news was getting worse. The nervous and excited soldier said that ‘they are on this side of the Sarmadan district, very close’. The Turkic cavalry had already wheeled round their flanks and they were increasingly surrounded.[101]

Roger realised that he had much less time to deploy his troops than he had thought. He immediately ‘ordered everyone to be warned by the sound of the bugle. There was no delay: at the first signal they were alerted, at the second they were made ready, at the third they assembled; they assembled and presented themselves to the prince in

front of the chapel, where the Cross was.'[102] In most battles, such as at Tell Danith, this would have been the moment for a rousing speech and for the last-minute briefing of unit commanders. But events were spiralling out of control. There was no time.

Some of Mauger of Hauteville's troops were beginning to filter back and 'Alberic, the deputy-steward . . . appeared as the third messenger, to forewarn our men'. The news they brought with them was deeply troubling and, perhaps for the first time, Roger became aware of the size of the enemy force he was facing. Alberic was extremely agitated and the men were beginning to smell panic in the air. Walter, who was there when he galloped into camp, described him as being so distressed by what he had seen that he looked like 'a person . . . who had been struck by a lance in his face and pierced by an arrow almost in his eye'. He had been with the advance party sent to scout out Il-Ghazi's intentions. They had encountered large groups of enemy cavalry and most had been killed. Two of their most eminent knights, Jordan of Jordan, one of whose descendants later became constable of Antioch, and Eudes of Forestmoutiers, from Picardy, had been captured and beheaded. Most of the rest had died in fierce fighting.[103]

The commander of the detachment, Mauger of Hauteville, was another of the survivors. He rode into camp soon afterwards, accompanied by just one other knight. They were in a bad way. As was often the case when fighting nomadic cavalry, their horses were severely wounded, 'struck with arrows, overpowered by . . . missiles'. The animals were so weakened by their ordeal that they died before their riders could finish reporting their news to Prince Roger. The news was not good. Muslim troops were close, much closer than they had expected. As feared, they were approaching ahead and on both flanks, 'divided into three parts'. The battle had not yet started, but the Antiochenes were already almost surrounded.[104]

In stark contrast to the Franks' efforts, Il-Ghazi's reconnaissance and intelligence activity had been extremely effective. Muslim scouts were prominent in the campaign, and had been present in increasing numbers around the Frankish camp at Balat. Il-Ghazi knew that he needed to entice the Franks out from behind their defences. He had to provoke Roger into action quickly, before reinforcements arrived from the other crusader states. The greater mobility of his forces allowed him to take greater risks, and his men, mainly light cavalry, could extricate themselves relatively easily from contact with slower-moving troops. The siege of al-Atharib, a desirable objective in its own right, had the additional benefit of baiting a trap for the Antiochene army. He knew the route by which they were likely to march to try to relieve the siege and he made sure that his men were well positioned

to surround them.[105]

This was not without dangers of its own. He was dividing his army in the face of the enemy. But he had numbers on his side. The risks were further mitigated by the way in which he could flood the area with light cavalry scouts and use them to make detailed arrangements for troop movement along little-known tracks. After the event, it was all too obvious that as well as trying to identify the plans and dispositions of the Franks, there was also a particular emphasis on investigating minor routes 'by which they could attack the prince with greater safety for themselves and greater damage to our men [i.e. the Franks]'.[106]

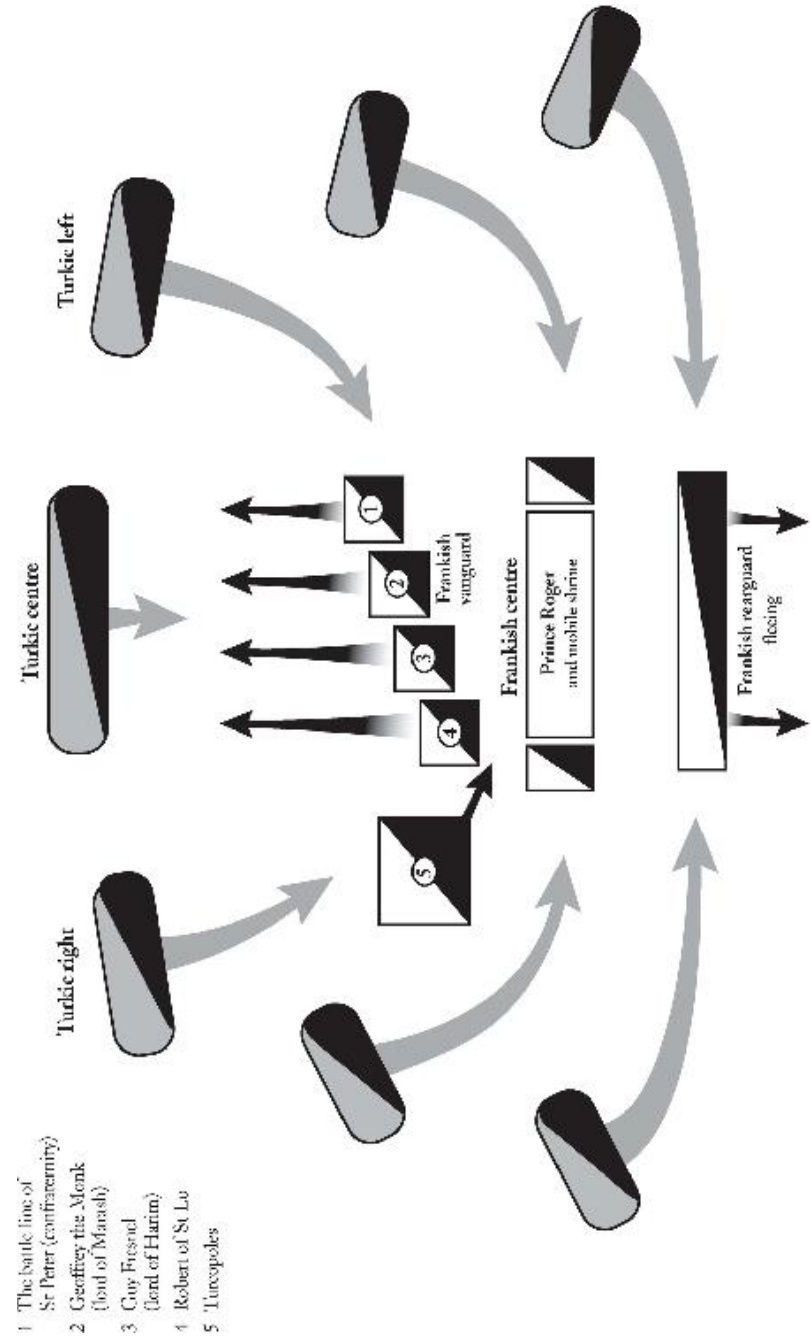
Il-Ghazi's plan worked perfectly. The Franks quickly became aware that they were surrounded. Prince Roger, even before the beginning of the battle, realised that things were not going as planned and described the Muslim attack as 'many-sided'.[107] At this point he made his last major mistake, and sealed the fate of the army. He had moved away from his defensive camp, and he was still miles away from al-Atharib. His best chance of reaching safety lay in carrying out a slow but disciplined 'fighting march' forward to the relative safety of al-Atharib castle. But this would have been difficult to conduct and, given the large number of ill-disciplined 'volunteers' in the army, Roger may not have thought it was feasible.

Instead, he seems to have decided to charge into the centre of the increasingly dense Muslim lines and push his way through to al-Atharib before the enemy could regroup. Roger knew that the first charge would be decisive. To give it the greatest chance of success, he sent Rainald Mazoir, founder of one of Antioch's most famous noble families, with a detachment of troops over towards Sarmada, perhaps as a feint to divert attention away from the main army, or perhaps to try to halt the continuing numbers of Muslim troops entering from that direction.[108]

The Antiochene army was still in good order and uncommitted at this stage, split into three main battle lines, van, centre and rear, and divided further into separate units within those lines. Last-minute adjustments and checks were made, and adjutants rode quickly up and down the lines to ensure that everything was as well ordered as possible. Final prayers were made in front of the fragment of the True Cross and the army's shrine and then each of the units started to march forward. Messengers were continually sent from Roger in the centre to the other battle lines and units, conveying orders and receiving information, trying to keep the formations as well ordered as possible. He 'venerated the symbol of the Holy Cross . . . then one by one the ranks raised their standards and set off in the assigned order, with bugles, flutes and trumpets blaring, and started their march

eagerly'.[109]

There were five units in the vanguard, the spearhead of the Frankish army. From right to left, these were the 'battle line of St Peter' (an elite military confraternity), the 'battle line of Geoffrey the Monk', the 'battle line of Guy Fresnel', and the unit commanded by Robert of St Lo. On the far left were the Turcopoles, tasked with protecting the flank of the charge as it connected with the enemy.



Plan 8 The Battle of Ager Sanguinis, 1119
Source: WC, pp. 125–31.

The attack was to go in from right to left, probably echeloned across the line. The 'battle line of St Peter' had performed well at Tell Danith, and was given the position of honour: the right of the line and

the first into combat. The confraternity crashed into the Muslim lines to their front and, 'giving their horses their heads, brandishing their lances as they made haste to strike the cohort in their path violently and quickly', succeeded in putting them to flight.[110]

The success of their charge triggered an onslaught from the next Frankish unit in the line, Geoffrey the Monk's contingent, drawn mainly from his lands around Marash.[111] This too was successful, routing not just the Turkic troops to his immediate front, but also other Muslim units on their flank. Il-Ghazi's vanguard was looking increasingly shaky.

The unit next along the line, Guy Fresnel and his knights, also thundered into the Muslim ranks, and 'attacked and assaulted the enemy with all its might'.[112] The initial attacks of the Christian vanguard were causing significant damage. Even Muslim chroniclers admitted that the Franks 'gave a redoubtable charge and the Muslims turned their backs in flight'.[113] The Frankish charge on the right and centre was looking successful. The battle hung in the balance.

But Muslim reinforcements were immediately able to step in to fill the gaps. The routed Turkic vanguard regrouped behind the waves of horsemen that were coming up behind them. And there were vast numbers of nomadic cavalry still entering the sides of the battlefield, infiltrating around the flanks of the Christian army, and moving back towards the baggage train and rear.[114]

The other problem was that, although the Frankish charge on the right and centre was successful, the assault on the left faltered and failed to connect. The Turcopoles were fighting a losing battle. Tasked with shielding the left flank of the vanguard for long enough to allow them to charge in, they were gradually pushed back by their opponents and, by the time Robert of St Lo's contingent was ready to charge, the Turcopoles were beginning to intermingle and block their line of attack. We are told that 'Robert of St Lo's cohort, advancing with the Turcopoles from the left, when they should have struck, were unable to . . . as the Turcopoles were first to flee, and, driven by their own side's charge and the shouts of the heathen, they got in the way of the prince's battle-line as it rode against the strength of the [Muslims]'. The Turcopoles soon broke altogether and, to make matters even worse, their panic-stricken rout was infectious and 'they carried along with them part of the prince's cohort as they scattered'.[115]

While the vanguard units were being pushed back and Roger's central line was holding its ground, the rearguard division was beginning to falter. They could see things were not going well. Turkic light cavalry were beginning to filter round the flanks. Turcopoles and some of the vanguard were running back past them.

The decision facing the individuals in the rearguard was a brutal example of game theory in the raw: was the battle lost or not? If it was not yet lost, they could help themselves, and their comrades, by reinforcing the centre division and standing their ground. If they decided the battle was already lost, they knew that their best chance of survival lay in an early departure, back down the line of march before the few remaining exit routes were closed altogether by the nomadic horsemen. In the event, they decided the battle was over. The rearguard ran, even before they made contact with the enemy.[116]

Walter the Chancellor, stationed in the central division near the prince and the Holy Cross, and writing soon after his release from an horrific period of captivity, was understandably bitter. He and his comrades were, he felt, betrayed by 'some of the nobles, who had seemed estimable for their vigour and abilities and their noble blood, who also did not sustain the first assault, abandoned their prince alive on the battlefield, deserted their kin and friends, and set out at some speed, before the field of battle and the approach to the mountains could be closed to them by the enemy's ferocity'. Although the fugitives had made it back to Antioch, he said 'they would have preferred the port', so they could keep running all the way back to Europe. As he commented bitterly, 'as usual, last into battle, first through the gates'. The early flight of the rearguard was deplored by those who were left behind. But it was not entirely irrational. The battle was almost certainly lost by that point, and at least it meant that a cadre of Antiochene cavalry escaped to help defend the principality from the consequences of defeat.[117]

Meanwhile, Il-Ghazi's troops were softening up the Frankish centre and vanguard with archery prior to moving in for close-quarters fighting. The arrow storm created by thousands, possibly tens of thousands, of Turkic cavalry was immense. Witnesses reported that they saw 'some of the horses stretched out on the ground like hedgehogs because of the quantity of arrows sticking into them'. The Frankish troops were subjected to a 'hail of arrows which fell like a cloud of grasshoppers'.[118]

The disintegration of the rearguard left Roger's battle line vulnerable to being surrounded. The Turkic cavalry were able to wheel round and attack the centre, starting to overrun parts of the baggage train and tents.[119] The Antiochene vanguard, aware that they were now encircled, began to fall back in disorder towards Prince Roger and his household knights, still defending the portable shrine.

Roger and some of his men made a last stand by the fragment of the True Cross, but it was all far too late. A sword thrust into his brain killed the prince instantly, and his household knights were cut down around him.[120] The sources make it clear that soon after the charge of

the vanguard, the Frankish army were almost totally surrounded. As an Armenian chronicle succinctly put it, the Muslim army 'engulfed the Christians, who found themselves surrounded on all sides, with no way out. All were put to the sword and the count of the Franks, Roger, died with his men.'[121]

The mounted members of the rearguard had unheroically but correctly decided that the only people who were going to leave the battlefield were those who were prepared to leave early. As the centre collapsed, thousands of Il-Ghazi's cavalry were freed up to surge across the plain, cutting off the few remaining escape routes. Fugitives were killed in large numbers as 'the battlefield was so hemmed in and access and paths to the mountains and valleys so observed, that not a single person trying to escape was able to get through unscathed'.[122]

The last few knots of the men from the vanguard were still formed in some kind of order and were prepared to fall back on the centre to try to make a fighting retreat. By the time they got there, however, the Muslim cavalry had already been through the baggage train. Events had moved so quickly that the centre had already been largely overrun and Prince Roger killed in hand-to-hand fighting. The army had been surrounded on both flanks, even before the vanguard had fully regrouped from its initial frontal charges.[123]

The troops from the centre division realised the main exit routes from the battlefield had been blocked. The survivors made their way to a nearby hill where they tried to establish a defensive position. They were gradually joined by refugees from the vanguard, falling back onto what they had hoped would be the fixed point of the army. But it was a vain hope. The troops were quickly surrounded ('blockaded by infidels') and subjected to 'a barrage of spears and arrows from all sides'. A small number escaped but most were soon overwhelmed and killed or forced to surrender.[124] By the end of the day the Christians were either in chains or dead. The 'Franks were on the ground, one prostrate mass, horsemen and footmen alike, with their horses and their weapons, so that not one man of them escaped to tell the tale, and their leader Roger was found stretched out among the dead'.[125]

Meanwhile, on the approaches from Sarmada, Rainald Mazoir with his 'three-fold company' had been conducting a battle of his own, and had succeeded up to a point, if only by diverting significant numbers of Il-Ghazi's troops from the main battlefield. It played out remarkably similarly to the battle experienced by Roger and his men, however, and with the same results.[126]

Rainald and his troops charged into the oncoming Turkic cavalry, routing the units to their front, and pushing back the enemy vanguard. As with the main battle raging nearby, it seemed at first as if the

Christian troops were winning, and would be able to punch their way through. But the sheer volume of the Turkic forces they were facing meant that this was not possible. The impetus of the attack slowed down and eventually ground to a halt. Il-Ghazi's units to their front may have been broken, but there were plenty of others coming up behind them. As the momentum of the charge was lost, the outnumbered Christian forces were overwhelmed. Rainald himself was wounded in the fighting, but his household men managed to get him out of the mêlée and fought their way through to Sarmada. There they took refuge in a small tower overlooking the town. Their hope was that they could stay there until reinforcements arrived.[127]

That was no longer a realistic prospect, however. Although they did not know it, the main Antiochene army had already been destroyed and the army of Jerusalem was still several days away. The 'tower of Sarmada' was useful protection for villagers against marauding nomads or small raiding parties, but it was not designed to withstand a siege. Later the following morning, Il-Ghazi brought his entire army to Sarmada, together with the few hundred naked and shackled prisoners who were all that remained of the Antiochene army. Rainald had no choice but to surrender, as with 'the weakness of the tower and the lack of food and, most of all, Il-Ghazi's arrival there were good reasons why he could not remain there'.[128]

Robert of Vieux-Pont and his men, who had played such a prominent part in the preliminary fighting outside al-Atharib, survived the battle. Perhaps because of their wounds or exertions on the previous day, they were lagging behind the main army when it was overwhelmed. They 'saw the sudden attack and sped . . . to the city [of Antioch] where with their dreadful reports they brought out the citizens and roused them to the defence of their native land. Some hundred and forty escaped by being outside the camp.'[129]

Luckily for the Franks, Il-Ghazi, as we have seen, took the opportunity of victory to treat himself to an extended bout of binge-drinking and torture. The arrival of King Baldwin with reinforcements from the south, combined with Il-Ghazi's physical condition, meant that a rescue programme for the principality could be put into place. But the Muslims were able to roll up many of the Frankish frontier fortresses, including Artah, 'Imm, al-Atharib and Zardana, pushing the Christian frontiers significantly westwards, back towards the Orontes. This was an important success for the Aleppans, who now had a far less threatening border to contend with. And as well as destroying much of the Christian frontier, Turcoman raiding parties were set loose across the whole Principality of Antioch. In the absence of any appreciable field army, bands of nomads were able to destroy much of the rural infrastructure, with raiders even getting as far as the

Mediterranean coast.[130]

That was the high-water mark. King Baldwin put an army into the field and met Il-Ghazi and his Turkic troops for another battle at Tell Danith on 14 August. The result seems to have been a fairly confusing draw, but it was Il-Ghazi who withdrew his men from the battlefield, and the ever restless nomads began to disperse. As Ibn al-Athir put it, 'Il-Ghazi could not remain long in Frankish territory because it was through their desire for booty that he had brought the Turcomans together. Each one of them would arrive with a bag of wheat and a sheep and would count the hours until he could take some quick booty and then go home. If their stay was extended, they would disperse. Il-Ghazi did not have money that he could distribute to them.'[131]

Even the most stable and focused leader, which Il-Ghazi could hardly be accused of being, would find it hard to wield such an army for extended periods of time. With the prospects of early booty disappearing, the campaign of 1119 ground to a close. It had been a major success for the Muslim powers, but they had not been able to convert that success into a cataclysm for the Franks.

Ferocious but Fragile

The battles of Tell Danith and Ager Sanguinis speak volumes for the strengths and weaknesses of each side. Ironically, they showed that each could be simultaneously strong in defeat and weak in exploiting success. Both armies had their strengths, but their ability to capitalise on those strengths for longer-term strategic and political aims was far more limited.

From a Frankish perspective, Tell Danith showed just how formidable their heavy cavalry charge could be. Faced with a fixed point against which it could launch a series of well-coordinated attacks, the Frankish cavalry were almost unstoppable. But there were severe limitations. A crusader battlefield success was always satisfying but, however convincing on a tactical level, it was rarely as conclusive from a strategic perspective. A resounding battlefield victory could destroy a Muslim army but there were plenty more where that came from. The next campaigning season, or perhaps the one after that, there would be another army to face.

The battle of Tell Danith was conclusive on the ground and helped establish a temporary aura of military superiority for the Franks. In the years between 1115 and their defeat at Ager Sanguinis in 1119 they were able to push the boundaries of their control further and further towards Aleppo and beyond, to the point where the city was almost surrounded. But the perennial Frankish manpower problems meant that they never took Aleppo itself. Even if they had, it is

doubtful that they could have held on to it for long. All they succeeded in doing was making the Aleppans so desperate that they had to find other, more dangerous, allies.

Battlefield victories meant that the Franks could sometimes push large Muslim states around. Occasionally they could even pressure them to a point where regime change became inevitable. But the new regime inevitably had better resources (ultimately that is why the regime change happened) and tended to propel the political environment in the direction that the crusader states were trying most to avoid: the gradual unification of Muslim power in Syria. Aleppo was put under pressure but, without the manpower to destroy it, all that the crusaders achieved was to transform a weakened and independent Aleppo into a far more dangerous opponent. Similarly, in their campaigns against Damascus in the 1140s, the Franks could exert sufficient power to wound, but insufficient military force to kill. The threatened Damascenes had little choice but to call in help from more powerful neighbours and, despite their natural inclination towards independence, take a decisive step towards Muslim unity in the region.

The Muslim powers of the period faced similar resourcing constraints which limited their ability to exploit success, but in their case the issue was less about the quantity of manpower available and more about their ability to convert that manpower into an effective arm of political policy.

The consistent core of their military capability was in the local ‘askar. As we have seen, this would typically consist of good-quality troops, with, say, heavier cavalry than one would generally find on the steppes, able to come to close quarters with Frankish troops. They tended to be Turkic-style cavalry, but unlike the ‘wild’ Turkic mercenaries, these men were more disciplined, better paid and capable of staying in the field for longer periods. There were two main limitations, however: quantity and tactical capabilities. Their numbers, albeit impressive in comparison to the size of some crusader armies, were always limited. They could defend their state, and they could launch raids into neighbouring lands, but these were rarely forces with the scale necessary to become armies of permanent conquest.

There were also issues with regard to capability. In some ways, the tactical problems of the ‘askar were the mirror image of those facing a Frankish army. True, their light cavalry were generally better. Similarly, the increasingly well-equipped and -armoured ‘askar at the core of Turkic-Syrian armies meant that, in theory at least, they had a body of cavalry capable of meeting a Frankish army head to head.

In practice, however, just as the Turcopoles tried, but failed, to

emulate the best battlefield characteristics of nomadic cavalry, so the heavier elements of the 'askar never matched the calibre of the Frankish knights. But, by trying to emulate them, they inevitably created a 'fixed point' of slower, heavier troops, with senior emirs formed in front of a camp with a vulnerable baggage train. This 'fixed point', as at Tell Danith, created a convenient target against which the crusaders could launch their ferociously effective charges.

In the same way that the Franks found it hard to turn battlefield success into political triumph, so too the Muslim states found it difficult to exploit their victories. Even in the aftermath of the crushing defeat at Ager Sanguinis, and despite their overwhelming superiority in numbers, Muslim leaders were still extremely wary of meeting Frankish cavalry head on. Ibn al-Athir is explicit about the qualitative differences when he commented that Tughtigin of Damascus 'suggested the siege [of Ma'arrat-an-Nu'man] be lifted so that their fear would not incite them to death-defying resistance in a sortie against the Muslims, when perhaps they might be victorious. His fear arose mostly on account of the shortcomings of the Turcoman cavalry and the excellence of the Frankish cavalry.'[132] The army of Damascus, with its 'askar and Turcoman auxiliaries, might be more heavily equipped than most steppe cavalry, but battlefield experience showed that they consistently struggled to compete in close combat with heavily armoured Frankish knights.

If the 'askar were to destroy a large force of Frankish heavy cavalry they first had to ensure that they were disordered, and that their battlefield capabilities were weakened. This usually meant bringing greater numbers to bear and surrounding them; disrupting their units with archery, inflicting casualties but, more importantly, wounding horses and chipping away at unit discipline; and by engaging the Frankish army at a disadvantage, perhaps on the march, in difficult terrain, or hampered by a lack of water.

The only way that this could happen was to employ large numbers of nomadic mercenaries. And these troops, regardless of their many superb qualities on the battlefield, always brought their own problems with them. They were ill-disciplined and largely motivated by opportunities for pillaging. Once the easy pickings were gone and the men were satiated, they were looking to return home. Controlling nomads in the field required great leadership skills and they were often just as dangerous to their own side as they were to the enemy. The 'wild' Turkic cavalry that Il-Ghazi brought to the battle of Ager Sanguinis had been equally comfortable destroying Muslim lands and villages to the south.[133] They were foreign troops, looking to leave the region when the campaign began to peter out, whether through success or failure. The kinds of generals who could best lead these

men were those who understood and shared their motivation and culture. But those leaders, like the nomads themselves, tended to be volatile, fractious and short-term in their outlook.

Paradoxically, these troops, the most effective that the Syrian Muslim states could deploy, were surprisingly fragile in an operational context, and were always better suited for battle and raiding than for conquest or other longer-term goals. So, in 1119, after the almost total destruction of the Antiochene field army and despite enormous superiority of numbers in the field, there was still no massive Muslim breakthrough. Il-Ghazi was able to make some quick gains among the frontier castles, but was unable to use his vast nomadic bands to make permanent inroads into the Antiochene hinterland. All the Franks had to do was behave cautiously (as Roger should have done in the first place), avoid another defeat, and wait for the nomads to go home.

CHAPTER 10

War with Saladin

HISTORY IS LIKE A detective novel with the last page printed at the front. We all know the ending. And that inevitably distorts our view of everything leading up to it.

At the Horns of Hattin in the summer of 1187, Saladin's armies destroyed the forces of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. They rampaged through the crusader states, capturing most of the hinterlands, rolling up the almost undefended castles and dismantling rural communities. The Franks maintained a presence on the coastal strip of Palestine and Syria, struggling on for a further hundred years, but the dream of resurgent Christian states in the Holy Land was shattered.

We think that knowing the ending gives us the entire plot. We see the conclusion and we extrapolate in a straight line from effect back to cause. We know that Saladin built an empire. We know the armies of that empire destroyed the Franks. We therefore deduce, spurred on by our own cultural egotism and a desire for easy determinism, that Saladin's Ayyubid empire was formed and focused around the primary purpose of destroying the crusader states.

'Jihadist' Empire?

In fact, that was never true. The Franks were certainly an enemy of Saladin and the Kurdish family firm that grew into what we now call the Ayyubid empire. But they were one of many. Ironically, the majority of Saladin's enemies, the majority of the states he attacked, and the majority of the lands his troops occupied, were Muslim rather than Christian.[1]

Saladin, his diplomats and his contemporary apologists always claimed that they were attacking and absorbing their neighbouring Muslim states in order to gather the resources necessary to launch an effective jihad against the Franks. To many commentators, however,

and certainly those Muslim powers on the receiving end of his army's attentions in the 1170s and 1180s, it seemed far more cynical. Perhaps, they argued, the Franks were just a convenient pretext for him and his family to take over all their neighbours' lands in the traditional manner of Syrian warlords.[2]

There was probably an element of truth on both sides. Whatever his real intentions, Saladin's political and military objectives were always complex. Certainly, if Saladin had died in 1186, shortly before the battle of Hattin, as it seemed likely he would, his reputation now would be very different, more that of a second-generation nomadic-heritage chancer and opportunist than a devout jihadist. Prior to that, he had spent far more time attacking and killing his fellow Muslims than he had the Franks. If his neighbours were a little jaundiced as to his intentions one can perhaps excuse their cynicism.

Regardless of the endgame which Saladin had in mind, if any, the typical opponents of his armies were Muslim rather than Christian. We need to share some of his Muslim opponents' more rounded perspective, and try to look more broadly at how his armies were constructed and deployed, before going on to look at the critical military events of 1177–87 in more detail.

Far from setting up a fanatical jihadist state whose primary objective was to destroy the Franks, Saladin's initial aim seems to have been to establish a Kurdish, family-run regime in Egypt, operating in competition to the Turkic super-state gradually coalescing in Syria under his former employer, Nur al-Din. And even the initial power base in Egypt was built largely by his uncle, rather than by Saladin himself. Just as Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, had done the foundation work that his more glamorous son could build on, so Saladin's family had already done much of the heavy lifting for him.

Saladin's father, Ayyub (hence 'Ayyubid'), and his uncle, Shirkuh, were born in Dwin, on the borders of modern Armenia, Turkey and Iran.[3] This was a Kurdish family. His people were Islamicised but had their own traditions and language. Ayyub and Shirkuh were eventually able to ingratiate themselves with Zengi, the rising Turkic warlord in the region.[4] Ayyub, a very capable administrator rather than a military man, was made governor of Baalbek in 1139, a sign that the family were well established in the new regime.

After Zengi's death, the family gradually shifted its allegiance to Nur al-Din, and his growing dominions in Iraq and Syria. This was the right move. As Nur al-Din's power increased, so the fortunes of Ayyub and Shirkuh prospered.[5] Shirkuh in particular was physically unprepossessing. Even William of Tyre who, surprisingly, was an admirer, described him as being 'small of stature, very stout and fat

. . . [and] afflicted with [a] cataract in one eye'.[6] But he was an extremely able general. Nur al-Din entrusted him with three expeditions to Egypt in 1164–9, designed, at the very least, to stop the decrepit Fatimid state falling under Frankish control or, better still, to incorporate it into his growing empire.

Shirkuh was successful, and eventually captured Egypt, ostensibly on behalf of his Turkic master. Saladin had only accompanied his uncle as a sub-commander, but, giving a first glimpse of the good fortune that was to characterise his rule, was able to assume complete command when a spectacular bout of celebratory gluttony brought Shirkuh's rule to a sudden end, just weeks after he had assumed the viziership.[7] It soon became clear that Saladin was creating his own family fief in Egypt and had no intention of handing it over to Nur al-Din.

Saladin's career was born out of luck and accident, but so were those of most Muslim warlords of the period. He was given an opportunity, and he took it. There was no grand design, no master plan. In a single bound, he was put in a position where he could create a new dynastic Kurdish state with Egypt as its base. It certainly did not look at the time as though this was ever going to be a Muslim super-state focused on jihad and the destruction of the crusaders. If anything, Saladin's betrayal of Nur al-Din was preventing the Muslim states from unifying and concentrating on the Franks, something he later claimed was always at the top of his agenda. Jihad was a good rallying cry for a family business looking to expand, but it was never clear that this was the primary goal, let alone the endgame.

The Ayyubid Army

Saladin's luck held. Nur al-Din had the good grace to die, just as open war seemed inevitable. Amalric, the battle-hardened king of Jerusalem, died only a few weeks later, plunging the most important of the crusader states into a series of debilitating succession crises and a loss of leadership at a time when Saladin was at his most vulnerable.[8]

The respite was put to good use. Saladin gradually built up his empire's war machine, turning it into something that would eventually become far bigger and more impressive than any of its predecessors. Remorseless attacks on his Muslim neighbours allowed him to incorporate their 'askars into his army, giving him a growing semi-professional force that stretched from Egypt in the south into northern Syria and beyond, surrounding the crusader states. Nur al-Din's death, and the power vacuum this left in southern Syria, meant that he had control of Damascus and its armed forces by the end of 1174, and he moved quickly to push his power base as far north as

possible. By early 1175 he had taken Homs and Baalbek, Kafartab and Ma'arrat-an-Nu'man. At the end of May 1175 he also took Montferrand, south-west of Hama.[9]

His consolidation of power, money and troops continued throughout the late 1170s and early 1180s. In the spring of 1176 he defeated the combined armies of Mosul and Aleppo at the battle of Tell al-Sultan (22 April 1176) and used the victory as a springboard to take Buza'a (4 May), Manbij (11 May) and 'Azaz (21 June). Saladin spent from June to September 1180 campaigning to establish his authority in the important nomadic recruitment areas of Upper Mesopotamia.[10]

At the end of 1182 he was back in the north again, taking control over much of what had been the County of Edessa and other lands in the Jazira. By October he had al-Bira, Edessa, al-Rakka, the Khabur valley, Nisibin, Saruj and Hisn Kayfa in his hands. A few weeks later, in January 1183, he took Sinjar, just to the west of Mosul.[11] Finally, in April 1183, he took Amida and, crucially, occupied Aleppo and Harim in June, with the latter locations in particular posing a direct threat to the crusader states of Antioch and Tripoli.[12]

With resources on this scale, Saladin was in a superb geopolitical position to bring pressure to bear on the crusader states on several fronts, and he could finally field armies on a scale with which to meet the Franks on the battlefield with a significant chance of success.

The Ayyubid Army: Egypt

Surrounded by enemies, Saladin needed to create his army extremely quickly. The Egyptian economy could support large numbers of soldiers, but the soldiers themselves were inevitably drawn from out of the region and were primarily Turkic or, to a lesser extent, Kurdish cavalry.[13] After the bloody suppression of the Fatimid army in 1169 and the purging of its surviving remnants during 1170–4, Saladin immediately began to ramp up his military capabilities. He formed an elite personal lifeguard unit called the Salahiya and boosted the size of his own personal regiments, as well as greatly increasing the size of his emirs' units.[14]

In September 1171 a full-scale review of these 'Egyptian' troops took place, very few of whom, of course, were actually Egyptian. They were marched in front of Byzantine and western diplomats in the manner of a huge Cold War Red Square parade. This was at least partially designed to show off the new army, a show of force to deter ideas of invasion. It was important to convince the foreign embassies that, despite the destruction of the Fatimid army over the previous two years, Saladin's new semi-independent Kurdish-Egyptian state was better equipped than ever to defend itself. There were approximately

14,000 regular cavalry on show. In addition, 7,000 Arab cavalry auxiliaries were present, but as we are also told that 'their number was fixed at 1,300 horsemen, no more', it seems likely that the majority of the latter were volunteers serving for booty rather than receiving regular payment. This was an act of theatre as much as anything and, in the effort to impress the foreign ambassadors, every available man was called on to join in.[15]

A decade later, in 1181, al-Fadil's diary noted that the regular cavalry element of the field army in Egypt had been reorganised, and now had an establishment figure of about 9,000 troopers. But this was just the core of a much larger army. In addition to these professional forces, the army also had other troops who did not hold fiefs, the Arab troops, including the Kinaniya Arabs from the old garrison at Ascalon, and the remaining Fatimid troops that were still on the establishment. And, on campaign, large numbers of irregular 'volunteers' were also recuited.[16]

Using Egypt primarily as a cash cow, Saladin also increased the size of the other elements of his Egyptian forces over time. An infantry component, an echo of the old Fatimid 'Black' regiments, was rebuilt, consisting of Nubians or pagan slaves from sub-Saharan Africa. As always, the presence of these troops excited a great deal of (generally ignorant) attention from Christian chroniclers, as much for their exoticism as for their contribution on the battlefield. On the Third Crusade, for instance, we find the Nubian infantry described as 'a devilish race, very black in colour, who for this reason have a rather appropriate name: because they are black ["nigri"] they are called "Negroes"'.[17] Likewise, at the siege of Acre we are told that there were 'a hideous black people . . . with red head-dresses on their heads . . . There were great numbers of them, all turned towards evil . . . Those with the red caps had a standard to which they all rallied; this was the standard of Mohammed, whose image was there in chief.'[18] Most of these troops were Christian or pagan rather than Muslim, and even if they were Muslim (in fact particularly if they were Muslim), would never have had a picture or standard of the Prophet with them: but the chronicles wanted some prurient local colour, however inaccurate.[19]

Saladin always had an ambiguous relationship with the Arabs, and particularly the Bedouin. They were deeply mistrusted, generally with good reason, and suspected of providing help for the Franks, or exploiting weaknesses among Muslim forces. Business was business, however, and although they might dislike each other, the Bedouin were occasionally useful recruits for the Ayyubid military. But relations were usually difficult. Saladin's letters reveal that an early expedition into the Transjordan, for example, ostensibly to attack the

Frankish stronghold of Kerak, was actually designed to clear out the nearby Bedouin, who were providing valuable assistance to the local Christian authorities. This was understandable from a policy perspective, but hardly calculated to improve relations with the Bedouin.[20]

With friends like that you did not need too many enemies, and it is perhaps not surprising to see that Saladin could never withdraw his entire army from Egypt at any one time. Until 1174, he also had to beware of potential attacks from Syria by his increasingly frustrated overlord, Nur al-Din. During Saladin's campaign in Syria of 1175–6, it appears that his Egyptian-based regular cavalry numbered only some 5,000 men, including his own 1,000-strong elite bodyguard regiment, an expeditionary force that was significantly less than the full muster. Similarly, when he left Egypt at the end of 1182 he was only able to take 'half of the 'askar with him and [he] left the other half to guard the frontiers'. As the Fatimids had found out before him, there were always other contingencies to bear in mind, ensuring troops were in place to enforce civil obedience among the population as a whole, and discourage the Sicilians, the Nubians or a wide range of disgruntled and disenfranchised Bedouin, ex-Fatimid soldiers and officials from revolting.[21]

The Ayyubid Army: Syria and Mesopotamia

The Egyptian army, and Egyptian money, was a good starting point for Saladin's power base. But the bigger prize, certainly in terms of getting access to the top-quality Turkic cavalry recruits, lay further north in Syria and Mesopotamia.[22]

As a broad rule of thumb, the larger towns of Syria could each maintain a core regular cavalry force of some 1,000–2,000 troopers, with the smaller principalities maintaining proportionately less. Damascus and Aleppo both seem to have had an 'askar of just over 1,000 men available for immediate action, though with garrisons and other detachments they may have been able to field a total force of perhaps double that number. These would also be supplemented from time to time by the forces of other smaller towns as local politics ebbed and flowed. When the Damascene 'askar set out to intercept a Frankish raiding force in 1178, for instance, we know that it could raise just over 1,000 cavalry at short notice for the task, as well as detailing other men to act as a garrison in Baalbek. Aleppo, similarly, seems to have been able to call on an 'askar of approximately 1,000 men in this period, supplemented by other forces provided by its dependencies. These were just the regular or semi-regular forces, however. For major campaigns or emergencies, they could also call on larger numbers of auxiliaries, volunteers and additional irregular

mercenaries, finances permitting.[23]

Mosul, much further to the east and with easier access to nomadic mercenaries, had a core standing army of some 2,000 cavalry, but could also access much greater numbers from its dependencies, such as Mardin and Hisn Kayfa, and from Turcoman tribes. Ibn al-Athir's brother was the keeper of the military register of Mosul, and he gave him permission to go through the records as he was writing his history. He later wrote that Mosul's 'askar in 1176 'was certainly more than 6,000 horse, but less than 6,500, for I have perused the review register', and even this would exclude the more informal Turcoman mercenaries, volunteers and other auxiliaries.[24]

Kurds, like the Turkic nomads, would either be recruited into the 'askar as regular troops, or recruited en masse as tribal auxiliaries. They inevitably enjoyed some special favour in the Ayyubid regime, given Saladin's ethnicity, but this should not be exaggerated. They were never as numerous as the Turkic tribes. Extensive fighting between the Kurds and Turcoman groups from the end of 1185 onwards also meant that even fewer recruits were available for Ayyubid armies in the south.[25] Even more disappointingly, they sometimes took Saladin's favour for granted, and do not seem to have been particularly effective. At the battle of Mont Gisard, some of the Kurdish cavalry behaved badly and their poor performance was not forgotten. After the battle Saladin 'stopped the pay of many of the Kurds' as punishment.[26]

As Saladin achieved increasing influence over Upper Mesopotamia he had greater access to the steppe warriors entering the region. Turcoman troops might be hard to manage, but they were good-quality troops and there were lots of them. In 1179, for example, Saladin called upon large numbers of Turcomans for his attack on the Templar castle at Jacob's Ford. He is said to have 'sent to the Turkmens and their tribes . . . for the gathering of their levies thousands of Egyptian dinars to be distributed among their hordes and paid to them . . . for their [service as] auxiliary troops': Egyptian resources were directly converted into large numbers of nomadic mercenaries. The objective was to hire these warriors by the tribe, rather than as individuals or small groups. Keeping them in their tribal groupings made them harder to control in some ways, but for specific campaigns or emergencies this was more than outweighed by the ability to import large numbers of good-quality warriors into a war zone at short notice, bringing their own leadership structure with them.[27]

In theory, large numbers of Syrian infantry were available to Saladin, but in practice, as long as he remained on the offensive, there was little need to call on them. The local city militias still existed but

had been militarily superseded by the foreign mercenary cavalry that their Turkic rulers had established for local defence and the need to ensure that Turkic rule over the native Syrian populations went unchallenged.[28]

They could be helpful in siege operations, particularly where those sieges were on the enemy frontiers, and therefore where their reduced mobility was less of a handicap than in deeper penetrations of hostile territory. Thus we find them performing a useful function, alongside the Turcoman cavalry, at the siege of Jacob's Ford in 1179. Imad ad-Din even recorded that it was an impoverished young infantryman who was the first to scale the castle's defences, leading the storming teams up slopes that would have been too difficult for more heavily armoured troops to negotiate.[29]

While infantry had an important part to play in Fatimid armies, the nomadic heritage of Saladin and his commanders meant that they were primarily cavalry generals. Mobility was always more important than a firm, fixed point on the battlefield. Muslim armies on the move, and particularly on offensive operations, tended to be very largely cavalry based.

False Start: The Battle of Mont Gisard, 25 November 1177

The creation of an Ayyubid super-state, incorporating the 'askars of Syria and increasing numbers of Turcoman mercenaries from Upper Mesopotamia, was going to take time, effort and money. Lots of money.

In the early days of his regime, Saladin was forced to rely on his core 'Egyptian' army. His first major attempt to use it against the Frankish heartlands came in 1177, once the defences of Egypt had been strengthened and the army rebuilt after the series of revolts by the old Fatimid regiments.

Saladin's plan to invade the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem certainly looked compelling, on paper at least. Much of the Christian field army was deployed in northern Syria, helping the Antiochenes at the siege of Harim.[30] The Frankish leadership was untested and, Saladin suspected, weak. The king, Baldwin IV, was only 16 years old and a leper of extremely uncertain health. As one Syrian chronicler morbidly put it, 'everyone despaired of the life of the sick king, already half dead'.[31] The king's main military adviser, Humphrey of Toron, was a capable general but was also known to be seriously ill and unable to travel, let alone fight.[32]

Map 11 The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem
Source: After Barber 2012, p. 72.

Saladin, on the other hand, had his large, veteran Egyptian-based ‘askar available for an expedition. Given the excellent prospects for booty in a relatively undefended Palestine, he also had no difficulty in

recruiting substantial numbers of auxiliaries to increase the size of the army and to act as scouts and raiding parties. Estimates of the size of his forces vary significantly and, given the large number of 'volunteers' and auxiliaries employed by Saladin, it is unlikely that anyone had a definitive number to hand, even at the time. A letter back to the west written shortly after the battle, claimed that the enemy numbered 75,000, which was clearly a wild exaggeration, while a Christian Syrian chronicle estimated that it had a core of 30,000 cavalry in addition to infantry and logistical support.[33]

William of Tyre, who was with King Baldwin on at least part of the campaign, made a particular effort to try to get an accurate estimate. William claimed that he had 'made a careful investigation of the enemy's numbers and . . . found that twenty-six thousand light armed cavalry, in addition to others mounted on camels and beasts of burden, had entered our territory'. Of these, William estimated that 8,000 cavalry were from the 'askar (he called them 'toassin'), of which 1,000 were an elite mounted bodyguard ('all these wore yellow silk over their breastplates, the colour that Saladin himself wore'), while the remainder of the army were 'common' horsemen. Saladin's cavalry, even the 'askar, were described as being 'light-armed cavalry': and they probably were, certainly relative to Frankish knights.[34]

William's estimate is the more sober of the sources and, if we take his speculation to mean that the core of the army consisted of perhaps 9,000 good-quality cavalry from Saladin's 'askar, supplemented by large numbers of volunteers, Bedouin and other Arab light cavalry for raiding parties, that is perhaps not too far off the mark.

Whatever the exact figures, Saladin's expedition was undertaken in strength. As Ibn al-Athir put it, he 'assembled large numbers of his standing troops and abundant levies'.[35] The size of the invading army was such that the population of the Latin Kingdom was thrown into a state of near panic. Some of the less well-fortified settlements in southern Palestine were abandoned altogether, as the inhabitants fled to more defensible positions.[36]

The exact intentions of the invading force are not known, and they may have been opportunistic in nature. The Christians, faced with an army of this size, feared the worst, and interpreted it as an army of conquest, set on completing the work of the old Fatimid army in trying to reclaim Palestine. From a Muslim perspective, however, its objectives were probably more limited, a massive raid rather than an army of occupation. Ibn al-Athir explicitly wrote that Saladin was 'aiming to raid Frankish territory'. There is no evidence, for instance, that the army took any substantial siege equipment with it beyond the borders of Egypt, and none seems to have been deployed even when it would have been useful to do so. Even lightly fortified locations, such

as the church of St George at Lydda, which served as a temporary refuge for the local people, seem to have been able to hold out for the short period of time required.[37]

The Ayyubid army moved towards southern Palestine and set up a forward position, still inside Egyptian territory, in the abandoned town of al-Arish. It was here that Saladin made his first major mistake. The heavy baggage was left behind, under guard, together with any siege equipment that he may have brought with him. The invasion was opportunistic: if the crusaders' situation deteriorated quickly and the chance emerged to take any of the southern coastal ports, he may well have wanted pre-positioned siege equipment to hand. He also ordered his men to leave much of their personal supplies and packs behind as well. He wanted them to be travelling fast and raiding over a wide arc. Living off the land, they would cause even more destruction to the local rural economy. This decision had its own logic, but for any army that had expectations of facing an enemy in battle, it was extremely high risk.[38]

Saladin then moved on 'with the lighter armed troops and the most experienced fighters', which sounds as though much of the infantry were left behind to guard the camp at al-Arish. He sent large scouting parties ahead of the main body, gathering information and spreading destruction around the countryside. The main body of the army marched up the old Roman road, bypassing the small southerly castle and town of Darum on their left and moving on towards the Templar castle at Gaza. The Templars were responsible for the defence of large parts of the kingdom's southern frontiers with Egypt, and the threat from Saladin may well explain why many of their troops did not move up north to join in the siege of Harim, unlike their Hospitaller colleagues.[39]

When news of Saladin's preparations had reached Jerusalem, it seems that the main body of Templar troops joined the hasty muster called by the young King Baldwin. As the Muslim army moved to al-Arish and their line of march became clearer, the Templars moved down to strengthen their garrison at Gaza, suspecting that Saladin would attempt to take it. This also seems to suggest that Frankish intelligence sources believed that Saladin's army had at least some siege equipment with it at al-Arish, as the Templars had 'retired to Gaza in the expectation that Saladin would lay siege to that place, since it was the first of our cities which he could reach'.[40] Saladin's men bypassed Gaza, however, and 'pressing on with all speed', reached the far more important position of Ascalon on 23 November.[41] The garrison of Gaza was small and Saladin did not bother to leave a masking force behind to pen them in. This was to prove another mistake.

The kingdom's forces were greatly diminished and their default commander in chief was a teenage boy with leprosy.[42] Rather than concede the south of the kingdom to Saladin, however, Baldwin gathered the troops still available to him and moved down towards the Muslim army. As the Ayyubid forces marched up from al-Arish, the royal army took up position in the strongly fortified town of Ascalon, as 'the king had received warning of his advance some days before; he had hurriedly mustered the forces still left in the kingdom, and his troops were already occupying the city'.[43]

The Frankish forces were seriously outnumbered. William of Tyre, who was present at the muster, says there were 375 men with the king, but in saying this he was almost certainly referring to knights rather than the rest of the army. There would probably have been a similar number of lighter armed cavalry present, mainly Turcopoles, but perhaps also mounted sergeants and squires called up for the emergency. There would have been a strong presence from the local infantry, maybe a few thousand men on foot if the city militia were called up as well. But they were far weaker, and far less manoeuvrable, than Saladin's largely mounted force.[44]

Saladin drew up his army outside Ascalon. He was in a very strong position. The Christian forces in southern Palestine, outnumbered as they were, were further weakened by being split between Gaza and Ascalon. And the main Christian army, together with the king, was now trapped in one of the coastal towns, leaving the interior of the kingdom virtually undefended. Saladin was implicitly challenging King Baldwin to come out to fight: to defend his kingdom or suffer the humiliation of seeing his country destroyed in front of him and his nobles. Combat outside the walls of Ascalon at that point would have suited Saladin very well. Without the Templar contingent, and in the face of overwhelming numbers of Muslim cavalry, Baldwin and his army would almost certainly have been overrun.

The Christian high command agreed. Baldwin took the most aggressive stance that he could under the circumstances, trying to meet the demands of honour without engaging in a battle that he had little chance of winning. He left a small garrison inside Ascalon and marched out to take up a defensive position in front of the Muslim army.[45] The armies faced each other for a while and the day took on a ritualistic feel. Single combats were fought in the area between the two forces, jousting between the knights and the elite heavy cavalry of Saladin's 'askar. Champions rode up and down challenging their counterparts to combat.

It is hard to judge just how commonplace was the ritualised skirmishing in front of the armies, or the effect that it had on the morale of the troops. It was probably far more normal than we

imagine, and helped to create the agenda for the battle ahead. Armies could display aggression without risking massive casualties. It gave a smaller force the opportunity to create an aura of dominance without committing to a full-scale battle. Individuals from elite social and military groups could build their reputations and display their testosterone in full view of their comrades, without worrying that their prowess would be lost in the confusion of a mêlée. And in situations such as this, where both sides must have known that a full-scale battle was unlikely, it gave the young men an opportunity to grandstand. Both sides doubtless had their own military celebrities, not necessarily the best strategists in the army, but individuals whom even the most humble soldier could look up to and admire. Even when the armies eventually met on the field of Mont Gisard, two days later, the Muslim sources described the Frankish troops as coming 'upon them with their battalions and their champions'.[46]

But on this particular day the cheerleaders were not the prelude to a bigger conflict. Eventually, as light began to fail, the Christian army withdrew back into Ascalon. William of Tyre offers the usual face-saving device for the young Baldwin, suggesting that the king was strongly advised to retreat by 'those of greater experience in warfare'. But there was little realistic alternative. It is interesting, but generally not remarked upon, that Saladin chose not to attack the Frankish field army earlier in the day, even though they had left the safety of the city walls. Although his army outnumbered the Franks by a substantial margin, he did not feel confident enough to try to force the issue. A crusader army in a strong defensive position, with heavy infantry masking a body of dangerously effective knights, was generally something to be avoided.[47]

At this point, Saladin made his biggest mistake. The Muslim forces interpreted this withdrawal as a lack of nerve on the Franks' part. Given the inexperience of the king, and the small number of troops at his disposal, this was not an entirely unreasonable assumption. Saladin sent large groups of cavalry, particularly the auxiliaries and volunteers, off to destroy the Christian hinterland. The cohesion of the Muslim forces began to unravel, as the men 'no longer remained in close array . . . [and] began to conduct themselves with utter disregard of caution. In scattered bands they wandered freely about and scoured the country in every direction.'[48] Ironically, he may also have been forced to do so by the sheer size of his army. The huge number of horses that he had with him required feeding, and, for an army that was trying to travel light, foraging for fodder in winter meant that some dispersal of his troops was probably inevitable.

The net effect was to divide his forces in the face of the enemy. The confidence he felt was infectious, and the Ayyubid army visibly

relaxed. As men were detailed to go on raids throughout southern Palestine, discipline in the army was loosened. But Saladin had grossly underestimated the fighting spirit of the Frankish army. The Christians in Ascalon could barely believe their luck. The Franks had presumed 'that during the night the enemy were engaged either in establishing their camp before the city [of Ascalon] . . . or had drawn nearer and were already investing it. But, on the contrary, without allowing themselves or their horses to rest, they spread in bands over the whole region.'[49]

Leaving only a few scouts behind to give warning of any potential Frankish troop movements around Ascalon, Saladin moved his main camp further north, where it could act as a better base for his raiding parties to split up and ravage the coastal plain and the towns and villages around Jerusalem. The lack of discipline in the army was apparent even to Muslim commentators, however. They 'scattered throughout those regions in raiding parties. When they saw that the Franks did not field an army nor gather any force to protect the lands from the Muslims, they became over eager and relaxed, moving around the country secure and confident.'[50]

But living off the land in southern Palestine in an unusually harsh November was not perhaps as straightforward as Saladin had imagined. The lack of logistical support certainly helped increase mobility, but the effect on the horses was beginning to tell. Although the Frankish forces still looked like the underdog, Saladin was starting to give them opportunities to exploit.

Throughout the following day, increasingly nervous messengers came in from all over the south of the kingdom, bringing news of the destruction being carried out by Muslim raiders. But while the news was bad, by the night of 24 November it was also becoming obvious that Saladin's army had overstretched itself, and was spread out in many small groups across a wide area. A council of war was hastily convened. Baldwin and his advisers decided that they could risk facing them on the field of battle. The king 'immediately left Ascalon with his men and prepared to march against the foe, for he felt that it was wiser to try the dubious chances of battle with the enemy than to suffer his people to be exposed to rape, fire, and massacre'.[51]

Saladin's departure allowed the Templars in Gaza to rejoin the main field army, few in number but greatly increasing the impact of the king's elite shock troops and the chances of a successful charge on the Muslim 'askar. A Frankish force of heavy infantry and knightly cavalry would always find it difficult to achieve tactical surprise, but it could at least try to move quickly enough to keep the enemy off balance. Setting off northwards along the coast, Baldwin was able to do just that.[52]

The march was tense, undertaken in the traditional defensive formation needed for a loose ‘fighting march’ and using the sea to protect their left flank: there were so many enemy cavalry on the plain that they had little option.[53] The army made its way up the coast, perhaps as far as Ibelin, and then set out to confront the Muslim army on the plains to the east. Turcopoles were thrown out as scouts and, led by the True Cross, carried by the bishop of Bethlehem, the army negotiated the last few kilometres as quickly as it could.[54]

As soon as he received news that the Christian forces had left Ascalon, Saladin sent messengers out to try to recall as many of his dispersed troops as possible.[55] By the time battle lines were drawn up, some had returned, but many were still filtering back into camp. Saladin was trying to re-muster his forces, but the flow of troops back onto the battlefield at this critical juncture was not entirely helpful: these last-minute manoeuvres had the effect of causing chaos in the ranks at just the time when they needed to be calmly deployed to face the Franks.

Part of the problem was the return of the light cavalry units, as they tried to shoulder their way into the battle line. There were other deployment issues as well, however. Slow progress when negotiating a nearby stream caused a lot of the units behind to bunch up, creating confusion and delaying an orderly disposition of the army as ‘the troops jostled together to cross’.[56]

The delays this kind of confusion caused had far-reaching effects. As the crusaders moved remorselessly forward, men were still being shifted from one part of the field to another. Talking to one of his closest confidants after the battle, Saladin ascribed his defeat to these last-minute deployment problems. He explained that the ‘Muslims had drawn up for battle and when the enemy approached, some of our men decided that the right wing should cross to the left and the left cross towards the centre, in order that when battle was joined they might have at their backs a hill known as Ramla Land. While they were occupied in this manoeuvre, the Franks charged them’.[57]

Despite his vast superiority in light cavalry, Saladin had allowed himself to be overtaken by events, and he was having to move hurriedly in the face of the enemy to rectify them. Baldwin was trying to surprise Saladin’s forces as far as possible, at least on an operational level, hoping to get to him and the heavier ‘askar core of the army before the raiders could be fully recalled, and the Frankish army became irredeemably outflanked and enveloped. Although some of the Muslim raiders had returned, it is clear that others were still scattered across southern Palestine. On the battlefield itself too, there were signs that the rushed pace of events had caused nervousness on the Muslim side, even before battle was joined. Saladin later wrote that

when the fighting began some of his men were still leaving the ranks, ostensibly so that they could collect their arms and equipment.[58]

The Muslim forces may not have been ambushed, but they had underestimated the Franks and had lost the initiative. The battle itself seems to have been relatively straightforward, with no complex manoeuvring or outflanking actions on either side. William of Tyre, our main Christian source, was eager to ensure that the young king, a former pupil for whom he had a great affection, got his full share of the glory, but there were other, far more experienced Frankish military leaders with him upon whose advice he could call.

William describes this 'band of brothers' approaching the field and tells us that 'with the king were Eudes de Saint-Amand, the master of the Knights Templar, and eighty of his brethren, Prince Reynald, Baldwin of [Ramla] and his brother Balian, Reynald of Sidon, and Count Joscelin, the king's uncle and seneschal'. The Christian battlefield commander was Reynald of Châtillon, the redoubtable 'Elephant of Christ'. William, never an admirer, glossed over his role, but Saladin's debriefing after the battle and the Muslim chronicles explicitly state that the 'commander of the Franks was Prince Reynald'.[59]

The Templars were the largest single body of elite troops on the Frankish side. Most of their Hospitaller colleagues were campaigning in the north, but there were certainly some present on the day, no doubt stripped from their local castle garrisons. A letter from the Hospitallers back to the west, written in early 1178, shows that some of the order were actively engaged at Mont Gisard as the bearer of the letter was said to be a brother who had fought at the battle, 'enduring serious, painful wounds . . . and losing a lot of blood'.[60]

The men of the military orders were placed together in the centre of the line, with the unsubtle but potentially battle-winning task of charging into the middle of Saladin's 'askar and attempting to destroy them and their master. As one Frankish mercenary, who had experience of fighting both with and against Turkic armies, said ten years later at Hattin, the best approach would be to launch an assault directly at the army's commander and his heavier, elite troops who would find it most difficult to evade. If they were routed, the rest of the army would inevitably follow. The strategy was sound, even though it was too late to adopt it at Hattin.[61]

There seem to have been two phases of charge and counter-charge. The first were inconclusive, probing attacks rather than an all-out assault, as the 'ranks of fighters on both sides now gradually approached each other, and a battle ensued which was at first indecisive, but the forces were very unequal'.[62]

Muslim sources make it clear that even this early stage of the

fighting was focused on Saladin and the centre of the Ayyubid army. Many of the battle casualties seem to have occurred at this point, as the two armies jockeyed for supremacy. When Saladin 'saw the Franks he stood firm with the men he had. Saladin's nephew, Taqi al-Din . . . advanced and personally engaged in the fighting in front of his uncle. Several of his men were killed and the Franks also had losses.'[63] William of Tyre, likewise, suggests that the fighting was becoming more widespread, and bloody, but that the outcome was still in doubt, admitting that at 'the very beginning of the engagement, we lost four or five knights and some foot soldiers, but the exact number of these is not known'.[64]

Once both sides were fully committed, however, the single most important decision facing any Frankish commander still needed to be made: when to launch the decisive charge? For most practical purposes, this was a one-off decision. The outcome of the first full charge was probably going to decide the day, one way or another.

The Templars were entrusted with the dangerous honour of leading the attack. They launched it with the rare combination of precision and ferocity for which the military orders were famous.[65] The Templar squadrons, fewer than 100 knights in total, broke the elite 'askar units in front of them. One knight even managed to get to Saladin himself, before he was brought down by the shaken Sultan's bodyguards. Saladin fled and his army collapsed as the remaining Frankish forces advanced upon them.[66]

Christian casualties at Mont Gisard are sometimes said to have been severe, an indication of just how hard fought the battle was. This is almost entirely based on a letter from a Hospitaller called brother Raymond back to the west, written in early 1178. In it he suggested that 1,100 Frankish soldiers had been killed in the battle and that '750 were seriously wounded and are now being cared for in our hospital' in Jerusalem.[67] Raymond seems to have been prone to extraordinary exaggeration, however, and was not present at the battle. His is the same source that described the Muslim forces as being 75,000 strong and the letter was primarily written to help raise funds in the west. William of Tyre, who was present on the campaign, makes it clear that Frankish casualties were light. The vast majority of the casualties, as usual, seem to have been inflicted on the losing side during the rout and pursuit phases of the battle, rather than in the close combat itself.[68]

Logistical mistakes had been at the root of much of Saladin's problems. Prisoners taken after the battle were in such a bad state that their captors knew a lack of supplies had contributed to their defeat. But the bigger issue was the effect this had had on their mounts. For a largely cavalry army, the poor condition of the horses in the campaign

seems to have been a serious problem.

The official Ayyubid version of events tried to make the best of a humiliating defeat. But even afterwards, it was by no means certain that Saladin would survive. Although the battle took place on 25 November, it was only in the second week of December that he made it back to Cairo. The party line was that the retreat had taken so long because he 'was travelling a little and then stopping, to allow the troops to catch up with him'.[69] Saladin wrote a letter on 9 December, soon after he returned to Cairo, stating that in the course of the retreat they had initially 'carried the weak and the helpless and went slowly so that the stragglers could rejoin the main body'.[70]

In fact, however, the whole army was dreadfully scattered, and the time it took to get back was primarily because they were lost, their movements were impaired by fear of Frankish pursuit and they had been deserted by the Bedouin who had been hired to take them through the desert. Al-Fadil, one of Saladin's administrators, seems to have stayed behind to supervise the baggage train at al-Arish, and in the aftermath of the defeat he hired more local tribesmen to help extricate Saladin and as many of the other stragglers as possible. The retreat back to Egypt was appalling. Few of the original army made it back, hindered by the poor logistical arrangements of the campaign, the worsening weather and the opportunistic behaviour of the local Bedouin.[71]

Ibn al-Athir wrote that Saladin 'proceeded through the desert until he came with a small body of men to Egypt. On the way they suffered great hardship; food and water was in short supply. Many of the army's horses perished through hunger and thirst and because of their precipitate flight.'[72] Baha' al-Din was debriefed by Saladin after the event and got his personal version of events. Saladin ascribed a lot of their problems to the lack of guides on the way back, as they 'suffered a terrible reverse and they had no nearby fortress they could take refuge in. They set out for Egypt, got lost on the way and were scattered. Many of them were taken prisoner.'[73]

Saladin was even more forthright about the aftermath when communicating with his family. The sense of relief was palpable when he wrote to his brother in Damascus, admitting the extremities of the rout, and telling him that 'we were on the point of death more than once'.[74] He was naturally concerned with getting the remnants of his 'askar back to Cairo. There was an urgent need to prevent local elements in Egypt, whether unemployed Fatimid soldiers, or others who felt themselves disenfranchised by the current regime, using this as an opportunity to start yet another uprising.

From the Christian perspective, however, we are fortunate in having an exceptionally detailed account of the pursuit and 'mopping

up' operations after the battle. These seemed to take place in three main phases. First, there was the pursuit on the day, harrying the routed Muslim troops as far as possible on 25 November, inflicting maximum casualties and ensuring that they found it impossible to regroup. Second, there was a slightly longer-term series of attacks to disrupt the Muslim retreat, aimed at intercepting the small, semi-organised bodies of troops on their way back to Egypt. And third, there was the broader task of rounding up the scattered raiders who had moved out across southern Palestine, before the battle had even begun.

William of Tyre was with the king as the different pursuit phases unfolded, and he personally interviewed several of the groups bringing prisoners back in over the coming days. The initial battlefield pursuit was as rigorous as possible, but was inevitably limited by the relatively small number of light cavalry at the Franks' disposal and the exhaustion of mounted troops and their horses in the aftermath of a battle. The infantry could deal with the wounded or individual stragglers, but small groups of horsemen were hard to catch. Nonetheless, the victorious troops did the best they could, knowing that it was important to use the opportunity to maximise enemy casualties. The Franks 'pursued the defeated foe from the place called Mont Gisard to the swamp known as Cannaie des Etourneaux, until day declined and night fell upon them. For twelve miles and more, during this entire flight, the foe was mercilessly slaughtered.' The battle seems to have started in the early afternoon, and, with the onset of night, there was little else that could be done until the following morning.[75]

King Baldwin withdrew to Ascalon on the night of 25 November, to rest his men and tend to the wounded. Further groups were sent out to pursue Saladin and the remnants of his army, however, and these small groups kept filtering back into Ascalon over the coming days, bringing booty and prisoners back with them. The pursuit of the enemy army seems to have gone exceptionally well, and memories of its unusual thoroughness were even commented on enthusiastically by the Syriac chronicle of Bar-Hebraeus, who wrote that the Muslims 'wandered about confusingly in the trackless region in those waterless deserts. And the Franks spent five days in overthrowing them, and they found companies and companies of them, and they made prisoners and killed.'[76]

The task of pursuit was greatly helped by the local Bedouin. They had long-standing relationships with the Franks, and were used to helping the Templar and royal garrisons on the southern border. If the Franks had an opportunity to motivate the Bedouin to turn on Saladin's men, they would doubtless have taken it. They were

certainly prepared to buy prisoners from them. One of Saladin's most trusted advisers, Diya al-Din Isa, together with his entire group, were handed over to the Franks by their guides, in a scene that was doubtless repeated in many different ways across southern Palestine in the days following the battle.[77]

But there is no evidence that the local nomads needed much encouragement. The Ayyubids posed a far greater threat to the Bedouin way of life than the Franks ever did. And, regardless of that, the chance to pillage a broken army was far too good an opportunity to pass up.

The baggage train left in the rear, just across the Egyptian border, with all its pre-positioned supplies, was another obvious prize for the nomads, and they were quick to move towards it. The Bedouin 'hastened to those who . . . had been left to guard the baggage at the city of al-Arish . . . they so terrified them that they fled in dismay. These Arabs also persistently pursued any who by chance had managed to evade our clutches.' With their supplies stolen, and Bedouin groups swarming along the coastal road, the remnants of Saladin's army were forced further and further into the desert, and their casualties mounted accordingly.[78]

The third phase of the mopping-up operations, bringing in the Muslim raiders who had spread out across the south of the Latin Kingdom, was also extremely successful. The activities of local militia and Frankish scouting parties were greatly helped by the deteriorating weather conditions. Storms exacerbated the effect of the poor logistical support that had bedevilled the Muslim campaign and 'for ten successive days thereafter, violent rains accompanied by unusual cold occurred . . . They had lost all their horses, which, during the three days' occupation of our territories, had received neither food nor drink, nor even rest . . . To add to the sum of their miseries, they were entirely without food and were perishing.'[79]

Groups of fugitives were left wandering around the countryside and were set upon by the villagers whose communities, only a couple of days earlier, they had been destroying. William of Tyre's bland statement that 'even the weak and powerless could vent their fury as they would' on the broken raiders, doubtless conceals a great deal of pent-up anger and unpleasantness. Many of Saladin's men were so disorientated that they thought they were already back in friendly territory and 'in their ignorance of the localities and thinking that they were on the way home, presented themselves in our villages either to travellers or to those who were hunting them'. As the mopping-up operations entered their second week, the condition of many of the Muslim stragglers was so bad that they began to voluntarily surrender to the nearest Frankish authorities, preferring captivity to deprivation

and death in the countryside.[80]

Interlude: Lessons Learned, Revenge Taken

Saladin was lucky to survive Mont Gisard. The trauma of that day never left him. Reynald of Châtillon had humiliated him, destroying his army with a force so small that it should, in theory at least, have stayed on the defensive until reinforcements arrived. The Templars had nearly killed him, and had succeeded in hacking down his household troops and members of his family. The Bedouin had proved unreliable on the campaign and pitiless in his retreat, killing his men and selling his friends to the Franks. Mont Gisard left emotional scars on Saladin. Destroying the Franks would take time but the revenge could be incremental, and it could start very soon.

Revenge

Saladin was no great admirer of the Bedouin even before Mont Gisard. In its aftermath, however, he increasingly had the money and motivation to address the issue. He took steps to reduce the level of military dependency on their services, and to intensify the control he could exert over them. As his power and resources grew he felt able to use a 'carrot and stick' approach to try to curb their independence. The 'carrot' was financial, reducing the overall level of payouts to the Bedouin, but ensuring that cash was funnelled to reward good behaviour. Tribes that behaved badly had their financial inducements reduced or cut off altogether. The 'stick' was far harsher, and revolved around land and food. Troublesome tribes could find their food stocks confiscated, and their access to land, vital to a nomadic lifestyle, denied.

Even the 'carrot' was hardly a soft inducement. Like many others of the dispossessed of the Fatimid regime, the Bedouin were financially disadvantaged by the rise of Saladin in Egypt. From 1171 Saladin started to reduce their presence in the Egyptian army and this was reflected in the level of the defence budget allocated to them: between 1171 and 1190 their payments were significantly reduced, despite this being a period in which he dramatically increased funding for the army as a whole. This gradual process of sidelining the Bedouin may partly help to explain their less than helpful role in the defeat at Mont Gisard in 1177 but, if so, their behaviour served only to hasten his determination to reduce their power and independence. In 1181, there was yet another financial crackdown on the Bedouin, with two-thirds of their fiefs being redistributed to more trustworthy recipients.[81] This had, of course, an unintended but obvious consequence. If the Bedouin were under-motivated and hard to

manage when they were on the payroll, reducing their income only served to make them more disgruntled.

That was merely the beginning. The Bedouin were felt to be such a support for the Franks, and to be cooperating so actively with them, that Saladin decided at an early stage to take more radical action. As early as 1173, when he was barely established in Egypt, he suggested in a letter to Nur al-Din that the best way to beat the Franks was 'to not allow any Arab Bedouin to remain on their territory', and that he had 'come to believe that one of the most important methods is the expulsion of a great number of these Bedouin, and the need to find a new place of residence for them, so that today, if the enemy ventures out, he will find no guide'. Their behaviour in the aftermath of the battle of Mont Gisard seems to have hardened Saladin's views still further, and goes a long way towards explaining the mass deportations of the Bedouin away from the Frankish frontiers which he ordered in the 1180s.[82] As the talk of jihad against the crusaders hotted up in the 1170s and 1180s, the support offered to them by the Bedouin was a theological embarrassment as well as a practical problem.[83]

Revenge against the military orders in general, and the Templars in particular, was also taken in hand. When the Templar castle at Jacob's Ford was captured soon after, at the end of August 1179, several hundred prisoners were taken. Although most of them were killed by the more enthusiastic 'volunteers' in Saladin's army before they could be taken back to Damascus, he had already personally ensured that all the Templar prisoners were beheaded as soon as they fell into his hands.[84]

It is clear that this was policy rather than coincidence. After the battle at the Springs of Cresson in May 1187, a large group of brethren from the Templars and Hospitallers were surrounded and overwhelmed by Muslim raiders. No prisoners were to be taken. The 'master of the Hospital had his head cut off, and so did all the knights of the Temple'. To increase the humiliation, their heads were stuck on spears and paraded through Galilee on their way back across the Jordan.[85]

In the aftermath of the battle of Hattin, a few weeks later, there were still more opportunities for payback. The members of the military orders who were taken prisoner were singled out by Saladin for execution. He gave them to his religious officials, the scholars and sufis, so that they could be beheaded for the entertainment of the army. Many of the scholars botched the job, causing much amusement among the battle-hardened Turkic soldiery. Altogether, some 230 Templars died at Hattin, mostly executed while held captive, and a somewhat smaller number of Hospitallers.[86] There were other reasons why one might want to execute Templar and Hospitaller prisoners:

neither of the military orders would routinely pay ransoms for the return of their men, for instance. But for Saladin, the fear they had inspired in him at Mont Gisard meant that there was a very personal motivation behind it too.

Reynald of Châtillon was a persistent enemy of Saladin in the years after Mont Gisard, and revenge against him came at the same time. He was captured as the fighting on the Horns of Hattin ground to a close, after the last Frankish cavalry charges were repulsed. The elderly Reynald was taken to Saladin's tent where, according to Baha' al-Din, he 'offered him Islam but he refused. The sultan then drew his scimitar and struck him, severing his arm at his shoulder. Those present [presumably Saladin's mamluks] finished him off . . . His body was taken and thrown down at the door of the tent.'[87]

Lessons Learned

Mont Gisard was an epiphany. Saladin was a lucky man. He was fortunate to survive the battle. Over the decade that followed, he was lucky to survive two attempts on his life from the Assassins and periods of severe ill health, one of which in particular he was thought unlikely to recover from.

But he was also a quick learner. Mont Gisard created his 'to do' list for the Ayyubid army: what it should look like, how it should be deployed and, most importantly of all, how it needed to behave when facing a Frankish army. He could indulge his emotional need for revenge, but he also had a clear, rational idea about what he and his men needed to do differently.

Strategically, Saladin needed to exploit his increasingly strong geo-political position, playing one crusader state off against another and striking whenever and wherever the Franks were at their most vulnerable. He could take action to help ensure their isolation, for instance by forging trading alliances with the Italian states that might otherwise offer them naval support. And he could set his men on a series of large-scale incursions to gradually destroy the Christian rural communities: the small towns and villages that underpinned much of the Franks' long-term ability to recruit armies and defend themselves. Although the Franks were always a dangerous opponent on the battlefield, that danger could be reduced by gradually degrading their military capabilities and the economic infrastructure which supported their field army.

On a tactical level, Mont Gisard offered three main lessons, all of which Saladin took to heart, and each of which became easier to address as his resources increased. First, logistics were the less glamorous aspect of warfare but they could make all the difference. An army without sufficient supplies for its men and horses could

deteriorate in the most precipitous way. They were also a great leveller. The most expensive Frankish warhorse was just as dependent on water as the cheapest nag in the baggage train.

Second, he needed to upgrade the ‘askar. It was clear at Mont Gisard that Saladin’s ‘askar were no match for the heavier Frankish knights, even though they greatly outnumbered them. If the Frankish charge could be held and absorbed, the knightly cavalry could be surrounded and gradually picked off. But Saladin needed his ‘askar cavalry to be better able to meet the initial impact of a Frankish assault.

Third, on the assumption that even an upgraded ‘askar would find it very difficult to contain a well-delivered Frankish charge, other ways needed to be found to reduce the impact of that onslaught. A Christian army needed to be manoeuvred into a position where the effectiveness of its charge was significantly reduced, even before it had been launched: the Franks must never be allowed to charge under ideal conditions.

As Saladin gradually rolled up the neighbouring Muslim states, the funds available to him grew exponentially. His was not a government with a massive administration or welfare state to support. The vast majority of the new wealth went to the military, particularly the army. Al-Fadil, for example, wrote that the amount the Egyptian administration spent on the army was five times what it spent on everything else put together: and even ‘everything else’ was mostly other military expenditure, as it included Egypt’s refortification programme and the navy.[88]

This huge investment was reflected in the quality of the troops he could deploy. The ‘askars of the newly acquired principalities were absorbed into the Ayyubid military. The best equipment and weapons could be made available. And money attracted the best-quality Turkic mercenaries off the steppes.

But most of all, it was reflected in numbers. The crusader states were already surrounded in a geopolitical sense. The substantial increase in available troop numbers meant that they could now be attacked from several directions at the same time and, if the conditions for battle looked favourable, they could be surrounded on a tactical level too.

As we have seen, the first major army Saladin gathered to attack the Franks, which he fielded at Mont Gisard in 1177, was substantial. But it was a polyglot force with a high proportion of amateurs and unreliable auxiliaries. Its size was deceptive and its battlefield performance was less than impressive. Units manoeuvred slowly and awkwardly. This was a largely Egyptian–Ayyubid army and, as with its Fatimid predecessors, different ethnic groups did not cooperate

well together. Saladin's own Kurdish cavalry behaved badly. The Bedouin probably killed more of their colleagues than the Franks did. In the humiliating aftermath of the battle, a massive re-equipment programme was put in place to revitalise the Egyptian-supplied elements of the army.[89]

By the time he faced the Franks at Forbelet in July 1182, Saladin had been able to integrate far more of the Syrian 'askars into his army, and he was able to field a force of some 20,000 men against a Frankish force of 700 knights and an unspecified number of infantry.[90] The size, cohesiveness and professionalism of his armies just kept increasing. In October 1183, his men confronted the army of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in an indecisive stand-off at the Springs of Tubania. The crusaders were able to field a large force, their greatest in living memory, and mustered some 16,000–18,000 men. But despite all their efforts they were still substantially outnumbered by the Muslims, who were described as being 'of vast numbers'.[91]

By 1187 the Ayyubid armies were characterised by Saladin's confidants as being a 'vast sea', and too big even for the widest plain. The semi-professional 'askar cavalry elements alone numbered about 12,000, and the total force at the battle of Hattin was some 35,000–40,000 strong.[92] These were armies on a scale previously unheard of in crusading warfare. The Franks had to continually stretch just to raise forces that could dare to manoeuvre near the Ayyubid army, let alone meet them in open battle, but even then they were considerably outnumbered.

The Frankish Response

The state that Saladin eventually created was a crusader's worst nightmare. From a military and strategic perspective, the Franks now found themselves surrounded and outclassed, year after year, with no obvious end in sight, and no clear way to improve their situation. The best they could do was hunker down, and hope something would happen to change the Muslim position. This was a passive and debilitating process, and one which clearly had a negative impact on crusader military effectiveness and the morale of their commanders from the late 1170s onwards.

Saladin's empire eventually stretched from Mesopotamia in the north, down to Yemen in the south. Whenever the Franks wanted to launch a campaign (and they rarely had the resources to launch more than one at a time), he could meet their army in battle but also invade elsewhere along their extended frontiers. As the Christian states became more vulnerable, and ever more threatened, he could start to play one off against the other, fix a temporary truce with one Frankish

state, and use the opportunity to concentrate his forces on its neighbours. Where once the crusaders thrived on Muslim disunity and exercised an active 'divide and rule' strategy, now the weight of strategic advantage turned the other way.

It was difficult to counter this new level of threat. The range of options open to the Franks was extremely limited. As Saladin's strategic position strengthened, so the condition of the crusader states reached a new low. Friends became ever scarcer. The possibility of further help from Sicily disappeared in August 1181 when Saladin's ambassadors arranged a ten-year truce.[93] The situation in Byzantium took an even more dramatic turn for the worse. In April 1182 a putsch backed by an anti-western faction installed a new emperor, Andronicus Comnenus. Italian and Frankish communities in the capital were attacked and widespread massacres took place. Even the papal legate was decapitated. Byzantine assistance and the occasional protection they had been able to offer the Christian states of the Middle East was a thing of the past.[94]

Practical help from western Europe was also in short supply. There were plenty of good intentions, and some occasional money, but beyond that very little was forthcoming. The Church did its best, particularly by promoting a broad-reaching trade embargo. A papal decree of 1179 banned the transport of 'arms, iron, and timber for galleys to Saracens' and threatened excommunication for any who sought to 'supply them with arms and necessaries to attack Christians'.[95] But it was nowhere near enough.

A high-level embassy was sent from the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem to gather support and stress the seriousness of the situation. They were looking for military assistance, perhaps a new crusade, and a marriage alliance with one of the great ruling houses of the west. The mission was led by the patriarch of Jerusalem, accompanied by the masters of both the Templars and the Hospitallers. The seniority of the ambassadors said as much about the desperate need of the Holy Land as the content of the messages that they brought with them.

They arrived in Italy in the autumn of 1184 and met with the Pope. By January 1185 they were in conference in Paris with Philip of France, and later that month arrived in England to meet with King Henry II, whose grandfather was King Fulk of Jerusalem. Everyone was sympathetic to their need but no one felt able to offer immediate practical help other than cash donations. When the embassy returned to Jerusalem in July 1185 they had neither western troops with them, nor any major leader from Europe.

While providing soldiers would seem to be the most tangible way to help, the commitment of a senior figure would have been far more useful. In 1174, the 13-year-old Baldwin IV had ascended to the

throne of Jerusalem. Just a few weeks later, the diplomatic and political situation facing the crusader states reached an all-time low, when Saladin added Damascus to his growing empire. As Baldwin was a leper, everyone knew that his life expectancy would be very limited, measured in months or a few years, and that even the time remaining to him would be marred by a series of irreversible deteriorations in his health. He survived until 1185 (he died about three months before the mission returned from Europe, so he was spared the news of their failure), but his health was always poor and his reign was inevitably marked by a series of leadership crises, as different factions jockeyed for position, waiting for the throne to become vacant.[96]

So, ironically, the appointment of a leading figure from the west to act as his regent and eventual successor would have been immensely practical. It would have stopped the in-fighting in the crusader states and given the local nobility someone to rally round. Just as importantly, it would have focused minds in the west on the need to provide continuing aid to the Latin East, at a time when it was needed more than ever. It did not happen, however, and with hindsight, the failure of the 1184–5 mission to the west probably ended the last best chance for the Franks to weather the coming storm.[97]

The Franks had little choice but to implement the best defensive strategy they could under the increasingly bleak circumstances. Some of the better Frankish commanders, notably Reynald of Châtillon, but also King Baldwin IV when his health permitted, were as aggressive as they could be on an operational and tactical level, seizing opportunities as they presented themselves. But they could do little to disguise the fact that they were on the defensive.

Christian manpower was always limited, but as this ‘arms race’ with Saladin gained momentum, and as Muslim armies increased in size, so the gap between the two sides inevitably widened. Frankish castles became bigger and better, and the surge in the ability of Muslim armies to take crusader castles in the late 1160s was halted, albeit at huge financial cost. But this just raised other problems. How could the Franks relieve a castle or any community under attack if they could not confront the huge Muslim armies that Saladin now brought to the battlefield? And, if they were too weak to confront an Ayyubid army, how could they prevent Muslim troops from ravaging the countryside, destroying local communities and small towns at will? This was a permanent existential crisis. How could a medieval society survive in the face of such remorseless pressure?

There was no entirely satisfactory response. It was a dilemma to which there were only partial and problematic answers. Frankish armies were forced to grow in size, helped by financial assistance from Europe which funded more mercenaries and a trickle of volunteers.

But most of the new recruits must have been from the local Christian communities and the Frankish agricultural settlements. Whatever their level of motivation, these were not generally hardened warriors, and they would have tended to be infantry rather than cavalry. Frankish numbers in the field could be temporarily boosted but only by a huge effort and only at the expense of an overall lowering of the quality of the troops deployed. Large numbers of the Frankish infantry arm were now little better than militia, useful in a fixed position, but with questionable morale and without the training or discipline for sophisticated manoeuvres in the face of the enemy.

The question of whether to bring the Ayyubid army to battle was also problematic. A Frankish field force could choose to meet the Muslim invaders, but the risks it took in doing so were increasingly disproportionate. The enemy might be defeated, but they could be quickly replaced. The balance of manpower and resources had shifted so much that even the crushing defeat of a Muslim field army bought only a temporary respite.

For the crusaders, however, defeat could be cataclysmic. As we have seen, the efforts involved in raising a viable Christian field army inevitably meant that the garrisons of the towns and castles were stripped to the bone. If the field army was overrun, then the whole country was at risk. With no one left to relieve communities or fortifications, they would have little choice other than to surrender. A large-scale battle was like playing Russian roulette: even the best outcome, an empty chamber, only bought the Franks time, but the consequences of failure could be terminal.

There was always some operational and tactical latitude, giving the crusader states the opportunity to vent their frustration and revert to their habitually aggressive modes of warfare. Large-scale raids and incursions could take place. Imaginative strikes could be undertaken into the heart of Muslim territory, designed to undermine Saladin's prestige as much as for any immediate military gain: Reynald of Châtillon's extraordinary naval raid down into the Red Sea in 1183 was one such example.[98] And much could be done to disrupt the unity of the newly linked Muslim lands. Communications between Egypt and Syria were severely limited by the aggressive patrolling of the Templars in the Sinai. The garrisons of the Oultrejourdain, operating out of castles such as Montréal and Kerak, could make a nuisance of themselves. Few Muslim groups below army size dared to make the journey, making everyday communication difficult and unrestricted commerce impossible.

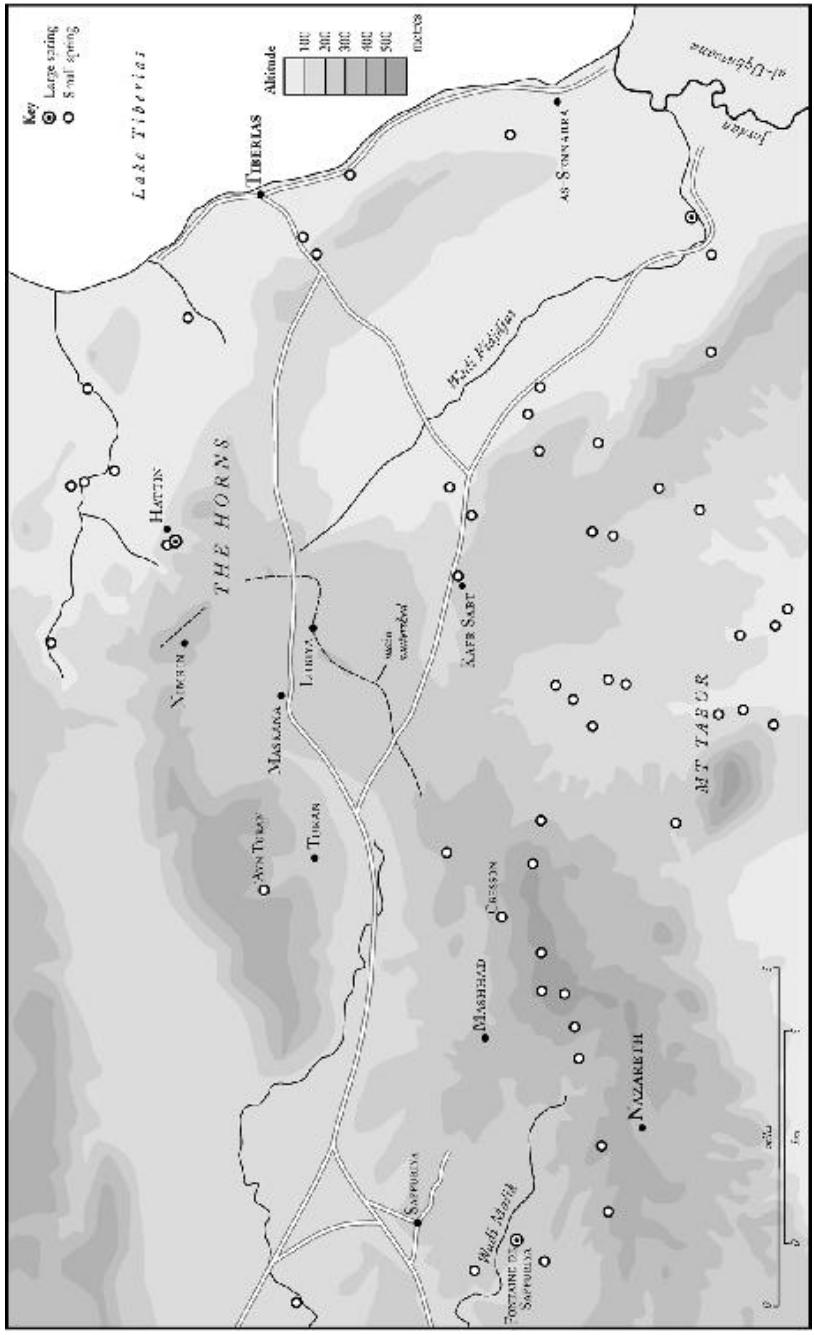
This was probably the correct response under the circumstances, but ultimately they were irritations and embarrassments for Saladin, rather than any kind of mortal threat. He remained firmly in the

driving seat.

With hindsight, the Franks had no single, compelling solution to the strategic and military problems posed by Saladin's empire. The best answer was probably to wait, hoping that his reign would come to an end. The fragmentation of the Ayyubid state would be a very possible, even likely, outcome of his death. The problem was that waiting out the storm was an intensely painful process, calling for immense discipline and sacrifice from men who were watching their lands and communities being destroyed piece by piece. But at Hattin the consequences of impatience and a lack of discipline showed just how much worse the alternatives could be.

The Battle of Hattin, 4 July 1187

The battle of Hattin has been the subject of many studies.[99] As the climactic battle of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, it was the focus of much debate at the time, and since. Much attention has been given to the decisions made by the Frankish leadership and the dynastic divisions and squabbles that influenced them to choose the path they eventually took.[100] This is perhaps inevitable. The natural tendency is to look back and analyse activity from a Frankish perspective, the authors and their readers being mainly western, looking in a mirror backwards from the disaster that we know awaited them.



Map 12 The Hattin Campaign
Source: After Barber 2012, p. 305.

But if the Franks had won, the squabbles of the nobility would have been just another obscure footnote in the history of the kingdom, not hugely dissimilar to other disputes which had preceded them.

Because of the outcome of the battle, however, every element of discord was examined in detail and every chance to apportion blame within the Frankish community was taken. It is also an approach which is patronising to the enemies of the crusaders, glossing over the achievements of Saladin and implying that it was only Frankish mistakes which made the debacle at Hattin possible. The performance of the Ayyubid army, and the decisions Saladin and his commanders took, have received far less attention than those of the Franks. Hattin was always a Muslim victory, just as much as it was a Christian defeat.

The Frankish army was an unusually large force, many of whom had never fought together before. Bohemond III of Antioch sent a small number of men, some fifty knights, commanded by his son, and probably an additional contingent of other cavalry and infantry, but the vast majority of the army was from the kingdom of Jerusalem. The stretch required to field such an army naturally meant that men were taken out of the many castles dotted around the kingdom and the key cities, both inland and on the coast. If the field army was destroyed, the country's entire system of fortifications would be extremely vulnerable.[101]

The Templars helped finance much of the recruitment. Henry II of England had given the two main military orders huge amounts of money to finance the crusade which he had promised to undertake as part of his penance for the death of Archbishop Thomas Becket. Gerard of Ridefort, the master of the Temple, released those funds to help raise troops. The monies were important in recruiting mercenaries and equipping the vast numbers of troops that were entering the military, many for the first time.[102] This was very debatable legally but vital from a practical perspective. The other main source of money was taxation. As well as the normal means of raising revenues in a medieval state, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem had helped pioneer the introduction of extraordinary taxation measures at the General Council of 1183.[103]

The army that emerged was as extraordinary as the taxation that had produced it. The cutting edge, as always with crusader armies, was the heavy cavalry, the feudal knights and their peer group, the military orders. For the Hattin campaign the king had mustered some 1,200 knights, split broadly equally between the secular nobility and the military orders, primarily the Templars and, to a lesser extent, the Hospitallers.[104]

Attracted by the money available and by the increasing necessity to defend their homes, approximately 3,000–4,000 mounted sergeants and Turcopoles were also recruited. Most strikingly of all, about 15,000 infantry were raised for the muster. The cavalry arm was large and, as far as we know, larger than in any previous Frankish army.

But it was comparable: a stretch perhaps, but one can see how it was achieved. The infantry, on the other hand, were available on a scale that was entirely different. Most previous armies had tended to have hundreds of infantry, perhaps a few thousand. The sudden appearance of these thousands of new infantry at Hattin raises the question of the extent to which these recruits were skilled or trained. And where did they come from? If there was a pool of skilled soldiers within the kingdom, why do we not see them in the sources before the 1180s? And if they were not skilled soldiers but instead, say, hastily armed peasants brought along to help with the foraging, what exactly was the battlefield role that was envisaged for them?

The Christian army mustered at Saffuriya. The numbers were unprecedented but there were disturbing indications that quality had been severely compromised at the expense of quantity. One Muslim commentator wrote that 'no one with a stick to call his own was exempt from the summons'. As an anonymous Christian source put it, the 'king of England's treasure was opened up and they gave a fee to everyone who could bear a lance or bow into battle'. There were two things that money could not do, however. It could not create more knights, the spearhead of the Frankish army. For these, there was a maximum number of some 1,200 men, only 10 per cent of the size of the Muslims' professional 'askar cavalry, and that number could not be increased at short notice. And it could not turn peasants and shopkeepers into experienced fighting men in the space of a few weeks.[105]

Spiritual reinforcements were at hand in the form of the True Cross and the clerical contingent that normally accompanied it. But even here, cracks were beginning to show. The patriarch Eraclius, who had been expected to accompany it, preferred to stay with his mistress in Jerusalem, and delegated the task to others.[106]

From the Franks' perspective, the Hattin campaign was like a Hollywood blockbuster gone wrong. There was a huge budget, but everyone forgot to invest in the script. The army that was raised in the summer of 1187 was massive, not just incrementally bigger than those that had preceded it but exponentially so. The problem was that no one knew what to do with it.

The campaign played out in a way that reflected the lack of strategic insight. Shorn of the political in-fighting which contributed so much to the Frankish high command's poor decision-making, the battle itself was deceptively simple: a close-order 'heavy' army, led by a weak and indecisive commander, was strung out along a difficult route of march, with its strength being slowly eroded before its more numerous and more lightly armed enemy closed in for the kill.

The Muslim forces mustered on 1 May 1187 and were reviewed by

Saladin in the Hauran, south of Damascus. The core of the army lay in the professional cavalry of the 'askar. Both Ibn al-Athir and Imad ad-Din, Saladin's secretary, put the number of mounted regulars at 12,000 'fief-holders or salaried men', together with vast numbers of irregulars, auxiliaries, retainers and servants. The professional cavalry of the 'askar would normally only account for between a third and a quarter of the total force, so the army was probably in the region of 35,000–40,000 strong. Muslim contemporaries knew that this was an extraordinary army.[107]

On Tuesday, 30 June, Saladin set up his main camp on the plateau at Kafr Sabt, close to the twin hills ('Horns') of Hattin. From there he was strongly positioned to mask the Frankish army mustered at the Springs of Saffuriya to the west, or to threaten the Christian town of Tiberias, capital of Frankish Galilee, to the east. With the vast numbers of troops at his disposal, Saladin could now 'multi-task' in a way that previous Muslim armies had been unable to do, and which the smaller Frankish forces could only dream of.[108]

He could simultaneously send out substantial raiding parties to destroy the local villages; get advance notice of the movement of any Frankish army and slow its progress by harassing it with his light cavalry; and he could move on any of the older crusader fortifications that had not been substantially upgraded in the 1170s and 1180s (such as Tiberias) with a very realistic prospect of quick success. The only thing he could not guarantee to do, the area where his plans were subject to major constraint, was to defeat the Frankish army in open battle, however much his forces outnumbered them. To do that, he had to hope that he could pressurise the Franks into making mistakes.

On 1 July, Saladin led elements of his army westwards towards Saffuriya, to try to goad the Frankish army into coming out to fight with him on his own terms. For the first time, he had such a powerful army at his command that he could confidently consider facing the Franks in the field. But in Saffuriya, behind their field fortifications and well supplied with water, the Franks were not highly motivated to emerge.

Saladin had two main ways in which he could try to exert pressure on the crusader leadership, and both of them played heavily on the emotional subtext of a feudal and deeply religious society. First, he could parade in front of the Franks, taunting them as cowards, daring them to show their faces. He could move skirmishers closer and closer to their position, inflicting minor but cumulative casualties and trying to gradually erode their battlefield discipline. For the proud Frankish nobility and their knights, this was a major test of will. Their army was pinned and they remained there, 'unwilling to move or depart,

and every morning the Sultan Saladin marched to within sight of them and opened fire on them from a commanding position and harassed them openly to make them confront him'.[109]

The other lever the Muslims could pull was that of systematic economic and religious devastation. The huge numbers at Saladin's disposal, and the large proportion of light troops, particularly Turkic cavalry, gave him the potential to spread out and destroy whichever region he was passing through, and much of the adjacent lands. Within a couple of days, Galilee was burning, and plumes of black smoke rose like ghastly tombstones above the scattered Christian communities. The 'whole region flamed in front of them like a ball of fire'.[110] Spiritual provocation was an essential part of this destruction. The monastery at Mount Tabor came in for special attention, being raided at the start of the campaign, and the site of the transfiguration of Jesus was desecrated.[111]

Having assembled such an extraordinary army, there was huge pressure on Saladin to make sure that it was used to decisive effect. It was important that he gave his troops access to booty (for much of the less professional elements of his army, that was the main reason they were there), but this was also a calculated policy, combining the sustained destruction of the Frankish rural infrastructure with deliberate religious violation. The longer the Frankish army stayed at Saffuriya, the longer the destruction would continue, and the wider the circle of devastation.

But the Franks refused to leave their camp. Saffuriya was a strong position and even though Saladin could bring greater numbers to bear, Mont Gisard had made him nervous of confronting a Frankish army on anything but the most favourable conditions.[112] On 2 July he ramped up the pressure even more by withdrawing the main body of his army and instead turning his attention to Tiberias, to the east. His troops assaulted the town in overwhelming numbers and it was overrun within a matter of hours.[113] The garrison, together with as many of the townsfolk as possible, fled to the citadel and settled down to try to hold out for as long as they could. Frankish scouts carried messages for help back to the army at Saffuriya, while all across Galilee smoke was rising from the villages and churches Saladin's men were burning.

There was another council of war in the Frankish army on the night of 2 July, to discuss how best to deal with the latest developments. The decision was taken for the army to remain at Saffuriya and maintain a watching brief, keeping a close eye on Saladin's troop movements and intervening only when his men had begun to disperse. This was a difficult decision for proud men to take. Saladin could destroy much of the local infrastructure, but the majority of his troops were ill-disciplined volunteers and tribal

mercenaries who could not be kept in the field indefinitely. He could burn villages, and even capture towns, but he would find it far more difficult to hold on to them. Once his army had gone home, the damage they had done could be repaired. This was an uninspiring, even demoralising, strategy, born out of weakness. But it was the right one. The Franks always had more to lose from an open battle, and a much smaller margin of error than their Muslim opponents.[114]

Early the next morning, the leaders of army were shocked to find that the decision they had arrived at the previous evening, painful though it was, had been overturned. Guy, under immense pressure, had been persuaded by Gerard of Ridefort, the master of the Templars, to reverse the strategy and, instead, march the army out towards Tiberias to meet Saladin in battle. Guy was weak and embattled. Gerard was highly motivated to seek action. His men had been decimated by a Muslim raiding force at the nearby Springs of Cresson just a few weeks earlier and he was full of desire 'to avenge the shame and loss'.[115] More prosaically, but perhaps more importantly, it was Gerard who had opened Henry II's war chest to fund the muster of the extraordinarily large Frankish force. If that army was not used, and if it was not victorious, awkward questions would be asked: the Templars would have to pay the money back and would face financial ruin in doing so.[116]

The Frankish nobles were bemused but eventually resigned to the change of plan. Levels of in-fighting over the preceding months were such that everyone was vulnerable to accusations of treachery or cowardice. Early on 3 July, as soon as the army could be organised, they set off eastwards. If there was a detailed plan of march, or a carefully thought-through set of objectives, they were not communicated widely. None of our sources seem to know exactly what Guy and Gerard of Ridefort had in mind. The army marched east, towards Tiberias, some 26km away, presumably hoping to relieve the citadel and, if the opportunity presented itself, to defeat Saladin's army.[117]

This was an unfeasibly long journey for a large army to accomplish in a single march. It was strung out along a difficult road, in extremely hot conditions and facing opposition from enemy forces that were both numerous and more mobile. And yet it seems that the army set off with the expectation that it would be able to make it through to Tiberias in one day. When the idea of camping for the night was raised, our sources suggest that the issue was up for debate. The location of any possible camp had still not been decided when the army was on the march and under attack. Even the timing of setting up camp had not been thought through. The whole march seems to have been decided on a whim, with an appalling lack of planning and

every indication that the size and capabilities of the enemy forces had been seriously underestimated.

The army set off in ‘fighting march’ formation, the elongated boxes of infantry protecting the deadly but fragile heavy cavalry within. Many of the elite troops were positioned at the front and rear of the column, reflecting the main areas of vulnerability. The vanguard division was under the command of Raymond of Tripoli, with his veteran Galilean forces and the Antiochene contingent. The king and his brother Amaury were in the central division, with the contingents from the royal lands and cities, accompanied by the True Cross and senior clerics. At the rear, taking up what would inevitably be the position of greatest danger, were the military orders, primarily the Templars but also a smaller number of Hospitallers, accompanied by many of their Turcopoles.[118]

While the Frankish army was at Saffuriya they were almost unassailable, in a strong position to be able to pick off Muslim detachments, or to take advantage of any mistakes Saladin might make. If they had ventured forth to meet him outside of Saffuriya, as he had tried to provoke them to do, Saladin was hopeful that his greater numbers would result in victory, or that his greater mobility would allow him to withdraw if things went badly. But the Franks would have been fighting on less difficult terrain and would have been able to fall back towards Saffuriya or other nearby fortifications if things took a turn for the worse.

King Guy had rejected both of these options, and chose instead to undertake a contested march, on difficult, largely waterless terrain, moving ever further away from supplies and safety. Saladin could barely believe the foolishness of his decision, and he ‘rejoiced to hear that they were on the march’.[119]

The Franks’ ostensible objective, the town of Tiberias, was in Muslim hands before the march even started, and Saladin’s men controlled all of the main watering points along the way. Some revisionist attempts have been made to paint the march as being less foolhardy than it might seem. It is true that there were water supplies at Turan and, probably, at Maskana, for instance, both of which were along the line of march the crusader army took. There were also relatively abundant springs at the village of Hattin. But all of this presupposed that the army could fight their way through under extremely difficult conditions. The army never reached the springs at Hattin and the water pool and cisterns at Maskana were entirely insufficient for the army’s needs. Similarly, Turan certainly had some water supplies, but nowhere near enough.

More to the point, Muslim forces were so strong that as soon as the crusader army moved further down the road towards Tiberias,

thousands of Saladin's troops occupied Turan behind them. Even if the water had been sufficient, getting back there was not an easy option. The left and right wings of the Muslim army swept round behind the crusader army, cutting off its retreat and any access to water.

Saladin later boasted that Guy's decision to leave Turan had been critical. 'The devil seduced him,' he wrote, and thereafter the Franks 'remained beleaguered, unable to flee and not allowed to stay'.[120] Saladin was correct. Once the Frankish army had marched through Turan, it had passed the point of no return. The terrain there is still open enough for heavy cavalry to manoeuvre, and the crusaders could have fought a conventional battle with some chance of success. If things had gone badly, they might also have been in a position to withdraw to the relative safety of Saffuriya. The water at Turan was insufficient for the large army that the Franks had gathered, with modern studies suggesting that it provides only a tiny fraction of the water available at Saffuriya or Hattin. Staying there in the medium term was never an option. But it could have been a short-term fix and was certainly less bad than camping further on, having no access to water and being surrounded at the Horns of Hattin.[121]

As the army lumbered on beyond Turan, Saladin took every effort to weaken the Frankish troops by depriving them of water and by cumulatively inflicting as many casualties as possible through skirmishing and archery. Steps were made to slow down the advance, ensuring that there was no prospect of the Christian column getting to Tiberias in one day: once 'they had left the water behind, Saladin came before them and ordered his skirmishers to harass them. From morning until mid-day they rode at great cost up towards the valley called *Le Barof*, for the Turks kept engaging them and so impeded their progress.'[122]

He also took great care not to stop them, however. As Napoleon later said, 'Never interrupt your enemy while he is making a mistake.' Saladin ideally wanted them to be stuck somewhere along the mid-point in their march, as far away as possible from water or the safety of a castle. His troops were ordered to hinder the march, and slow its progress, but to continually withdraw in front of it, avoiding giving the Franks any opportunity to launch one of their famous charges. Saladin 'set his army to face them and kept a watch on their vanguard in case they should charge; he cut off their access to water and filled in the wells, which caused them great hardship. He prevented their getting down to the water and set himself between them and their objective, keeping them at a distance. This was on a burningly hot day.'[123]

The main body of the Frankish army only made its way some three or four kilometres further. Once they were roughly halfway between

Saffuriya and Tiberias, Saladin sprang his trap. The pressure was ratcheted up. Increasing efforts were made to degrade unit cohesion within the Frankish army. The rearguard in particular was under unsustainable stress and in danger of falling behind. Turkic cavalry attacked 'the army's rear, so that the Templars and the others in the rear were barely able to struggle on'.[124]

The pace of the whole army was slowing, just as Saladin intended, and precisely where it would be most vulnerable. While the rear division slowed down, and was almost fought to a standstill, Raymond and the vanguard division were sending desperate messages back to King Guy, telling him to move faster. The vanguard, many of whom were Galilean troops local to the area, knew that they needed to march on as quickly as possible. They understood that they 'were going to pass through a confined, rocky area in order to reach the Sea of Galilee . . . For this reason the count sent word to the king: "We must hurry and pass through this area, so that we and our men may be safe near the water. Otherwise we will be in danger of making camp at a waterless spot".'[125]

King Guy was faced with an appalling decision. He could move on, and sacrifice his elite rearguard troops in order to save the core of his army. Or he could try to maintain the cohesion of the army as a whole, and make camp, waiting for the rearguard to catch up. This was a difficult choice and one which implicitly acknowledged his failure as a leader: the Franks had been so thoroughly outmanoeuvred that the battle was already half lost, even before the main fighting had begun. From this point onwards, the central issue was about how much of the Christian army could be extricated, not whether they could defeat Saladin. Guy, faced with a difficult problem, could generally be relied upon to come up with the wrong answer. This was no exception.

He decided to camp at the small village, or 'casal', of Maskana. Doubtless written with hindsight, but nonetheless true, we are told that Count Raymond, 'when he looked back [from the vanguard] and saw the tents pitched, exclaimed "Alas, Lord God, the battle is over! We have been betrayed unto death. The kingdom is finished!"' Stopping there was not entirely irrational. Maskana has been ruined in modern times, with no water supplies, but it was a small, inhabited settlement in 1187. The village had a water pool (Birkat Maskana) and there were six large cisterns nearby. As with Turan, any water there would have been insufficient for the army but, they probably thought, a little water is better than none.[126]

The available water was so limited, however, that the majority of the army were probably unaware that it even existed. The troops suffered dreadful privations during the night. The horses in particular,

on which the Franks would depend if they were ever to try to punch their way through the Muslim lines, suffered from dehydration. With each passing hour, the crusader capacity for a battle-winning charge was being eroded.

From Saladin's perspective, the battle was unfolding perfectly. At very little risk, and having taken remarkably few casualties, he could watch the Frankish army melting away in front of him:

> When the Saracens saw that the Christians were making camp they were delighted. They camped around the Christian host so close that they could talk to one another, and if a cat had fled from the Christian host it could not have escaped without the Saracens taking it. That night the Christians were in great discomfort. Great harm befell the host since there was not a man or a horse that had anything to drink that night.[127]

Casualties from archery fire mounted as the Muslim skirmishers grew ever bolder. To make matters worse, Saladin ordered his men to set fire to the surrounding grass and brush, exacerbating the effect of the heat and masking the approach of his horse archers. By the following morning it was clear that the Frankish army was floundering. Morale had plummeted as the men increasingly saw no way in which they could win. Desertions began, and men started to drift off to find someone they could surrender to, something almost unheard of in crusading battles.[128]

Saladin did not commit the bulk of his professional troops to the early stages of the battle on 4 July. This was entirely sensible. He had no need to move his troops into combat with an enemy who was already rapidly weakening. He wanted to ensure that the Franks were thoroughly debilitated by archery and thirst before he faced them in hand-to-hand combat. The Muslim forces 'held off and did not want to engage in fighting until the heat got up . . . There was a big swathe of grass in the plain of *Barof*, and the wind got up strongly from that direction; the Saracens came and set fire to it all around so that the fire would cause as much harm as the sun, and they stayed back until it was [towards noon].'[129]

He also held back because he wanted to ensure that he knew their line of march. There was still a possibility that the Franks might try to fight their way back to Turan, with its springs, however inadequate. In the event, however, Guy's army was too weakened and outnumbered for that to be a serious option.[130]

Even at this juncture, when leadership was called for more than ever, King Guy displayed his customary weakness. Rather than try to rally the men himself, he merely 'ordered his brother [Amaury], who was the constable, to organise the divisions'. As the *Continuation of William of Tyre* sardonically put it, Amaury 'did as best he could'.[131]

Amaury's task was the medieval equivalent of rearranging the deck

chairs on the *Titanic*, but there was still sufficient discipline for the normal 'fighting march' formations to be adopted, and the same three divisions were established: Raymond of Tripoli and his men in the van; the king and the main royal contingents in the centre; and the rearguard, commanded by the Templars but also including the Hospitallers and large numbers of Turcopoles, continuing to fend off attacks from behind. The Franks:

> formed their battle lines and hurried to pass through this region in the hope that when they had regained a watering place and had refreshed themselves, they could attack and fight the foe more vigorously. The count moved out to take the spot which the Turks had already begun to approach. When our men were arrayed and grouped in battle formation the infantry were ordered to take positions facing the enemy's arrows, so that the infantry would be protected from an enemy charge by the knights' lances. Thus, with each providing protection for the other, they would both be safe.[132]

As the army moved slowly eastwards, on the approaches to the Horns of Hattin, it was almost brought to a standstill. In the rearguard, the ever aggressive Templars launched a desperate charge. This had some initial success but, heavily outnumbered, it eventually lost momentum and was repulsed.[133] Messages sent back to the west after the battle complained that a lack of support from other parts of the army caused the Templar charge to fail. One Hospitaller letter sent to Italy said that 'at around the third hour the master of the Temple charged with all his brothers. They received no assistance, and God allowed most of them to be lost.'[134] The entire length of the Christian line of march was now under almost unbearable pressure. The rearguard sent messengers to try to get reinforcements from Guy.[135] But there was precious little that the king could do. He had no reserves to spare. Far from providing reinforcements, he was looking for the rearguard to buy time for the rest of the army to push forward. The vanguard continued to do just that, and was gradually edging on, further away from the rest of the army.

The rearguard was increasingly pushed back onto the central division, as the Muslim weight of numbers began to tell and Christian casualties built up. Discipline began to break down in the Frankish ranks and 'the men who were with the count of Tripoli in the [vanguard] saw that the king, the Hospitallers, the Templars and everyone else were jumbled together and mingled with the Turks'. Matters were deteriorating quickly. The army was moving extremely slowly, and even that with the greatest difficulty.[136]

The vanguard, under Raymond of Tripoli, charged to try to clear the way ahead. His men launched a ferocious attack on the Muslim units in front of them, perhaps attempting to force their way through the Hattin gorge towards Tiberias. Or maybe, less ambitiously, they

were trying to create a path for the army, so that it could make its way through to the springs at the nearby village of Hattin. Either way, it was an increasingly forlorn hope. The Muslim troops were still wary of taking the full brunt of a Frankish cavalry charge but they had surrounded the Christians in such numbers that a full breakthrough was never a realistic prospect. As Ibn al-Athir put it, Count Raymond:

> and his followers agreed to charge those nearest them. The commander of the Muslims in that sector was Taqi al-Din 'Umar, Saladin's nephew. When he saw the Franks charge in such a desperate fashion, he knew that there was no possibility of standing firm to face them, so he ordered his men to open a path for them by which they could leave the field. This they did and the count and his men rode away. The ranks were then closed again.[137]

Once they had charged through the Muslim ranks it was apparent that Raymond and his men had achieved little. They had not broken Taqi al-Din's division. Dehydrated, outnumbered and with increasing numbers of wounded horses, getting a few men through was perhaps the best they could realistically hope for. But there was now no way back. They had left all the infantry of the vanguard division behind, and, in their weakened condition, could achieve little by trying to return. King Guy, with the rest of the army, was completely surrounded. Looking back up the gorge, Raymond 'saw that there was a multitude of the barbarians between themselves and the king, so that they could not get through to return to the Lord's cross . . . Meanwhile, thousands and thousands of Syrians were charging at the Christians, shooting arrows and killing them.'[138]

Raymond and a few of his cavalry escaped and eventually made their way to Tyre. After the event, when recriminations were flying around the different factions, Raymond was accused of cowardice, or even treachery, because of his departure from the battlefield. Other sources, however, suggest that he had been ordered by King Guy to charge into the thick of the enemy ranks to create a way through for the rest of the army. Raymond died soon afterwards and was in no position to refute the accusations made against him. But whether he had been directly ordered to charge or not, it was entirely sensible at this point for the vanguard to do just that.

In fact, early on 4 July, at the start of the battle, the tactics for the day ahead were discussed at the council of war. A knight called John, who had served as a mercenary in Turkic armies and knew their tactics well, advised the gathered nobles that the best action they could take would be to charge into the centre of the Muslim forces and try to break through to the point where their standards and commanders were located. This was hardly profound advice. It was, after all, normal best practice to do so and, as we have seen, was what the army had done at Mont Gisard a decade earlier. But given the

situation the army found itself in, it was hard to come up with a better alternative. In the event, Saladin was not close enough to the fighting to be a realistic target, but Raymond aimed his men at the next best thing, the divisional commander, Taqi al-Din. Raymond, whether under direct orders or not, was doing what any good vanguard commander would have done under the same circumstances, and was just enacting the tactical response which the Frankish high command had discussed earlier in the day. The trouble was that the strategic situation was now so weak that any tactical success could not be exploited. It could only delay the inevitable collapse.[139]

Not surprisingly, discipline was breaking down in the main army. At first, individual soldiers on the fringes of the army and in imminent danger of being cut off began to give up: 'some foot sergeants surrendered to the Saracens with their necks bared, such was their suffering through thirst'.[140]

With the situation growing ever more desperate, it was becoming clear that the only people who were going to escape from the battlefield were those on horses. The infantry in the vanguard had taken casualties from their own knights as they charged through them down the gorge, and they had just seen their social superiors ride through the Muslim ranks and continue off into the distance. There was little else the knights could do, but morale among the infantry inevitably plummeted. Large groups of men, perhaps following the example of the now leaderless infantry from the vanguard, moved in a tight group up the nearby hill. The infantry 'banded together in a single wedge-shaped formation, clambered at full speed to the very summit of a high mountain, leaving the army to its fate'.[141]

This was a very natural reaction on their part, almost a reflex response to the conditions they faced. In 1119, as the Christian infantry of Prince Roger of Antioch found themselves surrounded and on the verge of being overrun, they acted in an uncannily similar way. The infantry at Ager Sanguinis 'flocked together from here and there to cling tightly to the mountain, which in a moment was . . . blockaded by the infidels', in much the same way that their peers at Hattin did seventy years later.[142] Efforts were made to try to persuade them to come back down into the camp and continue the fight: 'The king, the bishop [of Acre, who was carrying the True Cross], and others sent word, begging them to return to defend the Lord's cross . . . the Lord's army, and themselves. They replied: "We are not coming because we are dying of thirst and we will not fight." Again the command was given, and again they persisted in their refusal.'[143]

Even if it was partly reflex, this spontaneous movement by the infantry had its own desperate logic. At least some of the infantry were professional soldiers, or mercenaries with military experience.

These were men who were not going to give their lives up lightly. Rather, they were just heading towards the most defensible available position. By a strange coincidence, both of the Horns of Hattin were semi-fortified in the Iron Age, surrounded by a wall, and the southernmost horn also had a Bronze Age wall on it, parts of which were still over 2m high even in the early years of the twentieth century. For infantry looking for breathing space and a suitable location in which to regroup in relative security, the Horns of Hattin must have seemed compelling. The walls would have provided cover for at least some of the spearmen, and protection from behind which the archers and crossbowmen could try to keep the Muslim enemy at bay.[144]

For the leaders of the army, however, stuck in the basin of the two Horns with the remaining horses, the idea of seeking refuge on the hills was far less attractive. The mobile shrine with the True Cross would find it difficult to negotiate a way up. The cavalry needed the infantry to shield them from Muslim archery for as long as possible, and to provide a refuge behind which they could regroup.

The infantry position was understandable, but their leaders were correct. Without water, the Horns of Hattin were defensible for a few hours, but were ultimately little more than a corral in which the Frankish troops would wait until thirst forced them to surrender. The only hope, and even this was a marginal hope at best, lay in a series of cavalry charges which could try to create an escape route for at least some of the knights and Turcopoles.

The king and the others eventually realised that it was going to be impossible to get the infantry on the hill to return. They did the best they could in the circumstances, and tried to create barriers around the perimeter of their position. Tents were erected as makeshift barricades against enemy archers and horses, together with any of the remaining vehicles of the baggage, and the knights prepared to make a final stand.[145]

Distinctions between the different units were almost gone. Within the Frankish army the ‘battle formations were . . . broken up. The units gathered around the Holy Cross, where they were confused and intermixed here and there.’[146] Casualties were mounting and the ability to make clear decisions was fast disappearing. The Frankish army was now so thoroughly surrounded, and the Muslim archers so close, that even senior figures at the centre of the formation were being cut down. A letter written to the emperor Frederick I immediately after the battle confirmed that ‘Lord Rufinus, bishop of Acre, died from an arrowshot while carrying Christ’s cross’.[147]

Like an old padre handing over the regimental colours, Rufinus had time to pass the True Cross into the care of the bishop of Lydda

before he collapsed. But by now there was little choice left about what to do. Regardless of how many infantry were available, the last cavalry charges needed to be launched quickly, while the knights still had some unwounded horses to carry them. As Ibn al-Athir put it, 'they understood that they would only be saved from death by facing it boldly'.[148]

The last remaining knights gathered together, some 150 men, with their squires and Turcopoles trying to add some impetus by falling into ranks behind them.[149] The charge was launched with all the panache that desperation lent them. As the earlier discussions with John, the mercenary knight, had suggested, the target of the charge was to be the centre of the Muslim army.

Saladin's son, al-Afdal, was with his father at the end of the battle and left a remarkable account of the final Frankish cavalry attacks. 'I was alongside my father during this battle,' he wrote:

> the first I had witnessed. When the king of the Franks was on the hill . . . they made a formidable charge against the Muslims facing them, so that they drove them back to my father. I looked towards him and he was overcome by grief and his complexion pale . . . The Muslims rallied, returned to the fight and climbed the hill. When I saw that the Franks withdrew, pursued by the Muslims, I shouted for joy, 'We have beaten them!' But the Franks rallied and charged again like the first time and drove the Muslims back to my father. He acted as he had on the first occasion and the Muslims turned upon the Franks and drove them back to the hill. I again shouted 'We have beaten them!' but my father rounded on me and said, 'Be quiet! We have not beaten them until that tent falls.' As he was speaking to me, the tent [of King Guy] fell.[150]

The charges were impressive, and they caused Saladin some moments of real concern at a time when the battle should already have been over. Ibn al-Athir leaves no doubt about the impact of the Frankish heavy cavalry assaults, as 'they carried out successive charges, which almost drove the Muslims from their positions, despite their numbers'. But every charge led to more casualties, more blown horses, more dehydrated animals that could no longer bear the weight of an armoured rider. With each assault 'the Franks did not charge and retire without suffering losses and they were gravely weakened by that'.[151]

Eventually, the last charge was repulsed. But even then the fighting did not stop. The Frankish knights and their squires 'hoped to improve their position by dismounting from the horses, and they fought tenaciously', continuing to battle on as heavy infantry, forlornly defending the last barricades.[152]

The Frankish infantry were gradually forced down off their positions on the Horns of Hattin. Some, presumably on the lower reaches, were overrun by Muslim cavalry attacks.[153] Others, perhaps further up and better protected by walls, were smoked out by more

brushfires and infantry assaults. The Muslim troops 'pressed hard upon them on that hill and lit fires around them. Their thirst was killing and their situation became very difficult, so that they began to give themselves up as prisoners for fear of being slain.'[154] The final moments in the Christian centre were anti-climactic. Beaten to a standstill like punch-drunk boxers, the survivors simply 'sat down on the ground' and waited for the victors to take them off to execution or captivity.[155]

The Franks had severe problems during the Hattin campaign. Ironically, many of these problems stemmed from their success in mustering an army of such unprecedented size. To face the increasing numbers of troops that Saladin could bring to bear, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was forced to put itself on a continual war footing. The numbers mustered at Saffuriya in July 1187 were needed if they were to have any chance of beating Saladin in the field, but the effort required to raise them was hugely damaging in itself. Financing, recruiting and training an army on this scale was increasingly difficult. Quality was compromised by the demands of the unremitting pressure Saladin was able to apply. The final efforts to keep up in the 'arms race' with Saladin smacked of desperation.[156]

This desperation was reflected in the way the Frankish forces were used in 1187. The army was only made possible by an exceptional effort, and by raiding sources of revenue, such as Henry II's war chest, which could not be repeated. Having gone to great lengths to raise such a force, the onus was on the king and his advisers to use it, even though deploying the army in a more cautious way was clearly the better option. King Guy was despised by many of his nobles and his reputation as a military leader was poor. With an army of this size in his care, an army, moreover, that would only be available for a few months at most, the pressure on the king to act decisively was immense.[157]

An army of unprecedented size also brought unprecedented logistical issues with it. Again, ironically, increased numbers worked against the Franks. Saladin positioned the core of his army well, around abundant sources of water. Much of the Muslim army could disperse to find supplies, looting and pillaging as they went, while the heavier, slower-moving Christian army, consisting largely of infantry, was more constrained. The Christian commanders knew the region well, and knew where water was available. The two springs at the village of Hattin, which were probably at least a partial goal of the initial Frankish march on 4 July, might have been able to support an army of the size which Guy had with him. But the springs at Turan, which he left behind him, were not. The sheer size of the force which he had with him meant that setting up camp at Turan was no long-

term solution, and encouraged the Franks to keep marching towards disaster.

There was also the bigger question of the infantry. Where did all these extra men come from? Some of the new troops were probably mercenaries from the west, attracted by the opportunities offered by a region on a permanent war footing. Some may have been part of the Armenian diaspora, men set adrift from Egyptian employment once the Ayyubids dismantled the Fatimid regime, or second-generation Armenian settlers displaced by the fall of Edessa. And some may have been the scrapings of the informal city militia groups dotted around the kingdom.

But professional soldiers do not appear overnight. Mercenaries cannot remain unemployed for long, so would have presumably changed their career or sought work in other regions. There was only a limited number of suitable horses, and the skills needed to use them in battle were acquired over years rather than a few weeks.

In fact, the short-term increase in numbers was only made possible by a massive decrease in professionalism: a trade-off between quantity and quality. Given the greater expense and complexity of the cavalry arm, the vast majority of these new recruits were in the infantry. As we have seen, even the Muslim sources were aware that the infantry were of poorer quality than usual.[158] Many of the Christian infantry must have been barely trained peasants, and this is reflected in their performance. The Frankish 'fighting march' required discipline and experience, and was founded on an understanding that the interests of cavalry and infantry were inextricably aligned. Each depended on the other, and everyone had a greater chance of victory if they worked well together.

By 1187, however, large elements of the Christian infantry do not seem to have had that discipline. The flight of the foot soldiers up one of the hills at Hattin, and their refusal to come down, reflects that. To a large extent it also reflected an (entirely correct) understanding that their interests were no longer so closely aligned with those of the elite knights and their mounted squires. Infantry and cavalry have a mutuality of interest if the 'fighting march' looks as though it may succeed. By midday on 4 July, however, almost everybody knew that they were surrounded by an overwhelming number of enemy troops, and that a fighting march forward to Tiberias, or back towards Saffuriya, was no longer possible.

The charge by Raymond of Tripoli and his men at the front of the column was a recognition that the best that could be hoped for was that some of the army would be able to punch their way through the enemy lines before a lack of water made any offensive action entirely impossible. This is generally described as being a charge by 'the

vanguard', under Raymond's command, but in fact it was far less than that. The majority of the vanguard were infantry, but the charge was a purely cavalry affair. Once they had charged, the knights could not get back, even if they had wanted to. It was increasingly clear that the cavalry were the only troops who were going to leave the battlefield. The *Libellus* even suggests that Raymond and his men rode down some of the Christian infantry in their desperate efforts to force their way through the gorge of Hattin.[159] The alignment of interest with the infantry was broken. Some of the poorly trained, barely disciplined elements of the Frankish army that disappeared up the northerly Horn of Hattin may just have felt that they could more easily defend themselves up there, or that they should be moving towards the water supplies that could be found in the springs in the village of Hattin.

But although the quality of the crusader army had been compromised, Guy had also commanded his troops in a weak and unimpressive fashion. His planning was poor and his decision-making erratic. In possession of the largest army ever gathered in the crusader states, he managed to throw it away before it even had a chance to fully contact the enemy forces.

'Their Lions Had Become Hedgehogs'

None of the Frankish mistakes at Hattin should distract us from the achievements of Saladin. Guy of Lusignan played a weak hand very badly. But Saladin played a strong hand with skill and patience.

The lessons of Mont Gisard were learned well. Over the longer term, he realised that the main focus of his struggle should be to degrade the effectiveness of the Frankish war machine before he met it again head on. He also had to take steps to upgrade his 'askar, increasing its size and professionalism and improving its ability to absorb a Frankish heavy cavalry charge. These strategic responses needed to be mirrored by similar tactical changes on the battlefield. The Franks needed to be worn down on the day, defusing the power of their charge before it had a chance to connect; and efforts had to be made to ensure that the 'askar was deployed in as strong a position as possible, allowing it to sidestep or absorb the initial shock of impact of the Frankish knights.

Reducing Frankish military capacity was something that Saladin devoted a lot of time to in the decade between Mont Gisard and Hattin. The attention he gave to attacking his Muslim neighbours was extremely helpful in creating a stranglehold on the crusader states, eventually surrounding them in a wide arc that stretched from Syria and Mesopotamia in the north down to Egypt and Yemen in the south.

The campaigns of the late 1170s and early 1180s increased his military resources and allowed him to take ever more active measures

against the Franks. The fruits of these campaigns can be seen in how the pressure was slowly ratcheted up. The almost annual invasions of the crusader states had a cumulative effect on Frankish capabilities, destroying the rural infrastructure that underpinned the growing number of Christian communities in the region. Inevitably, this had an effect on economic capacity, and the Franks' ability to support an increasing population of European settlers and their local co-religionists. With demographic and economic pressure also came increased demands on their ability to maintain the huge war machine required to defend the Holy Land. This effort was already unprecedented by the standards of medieval Europe. Over time, Saladin must have hoped that it would become completely unsustainable.

The efforts to improve the 'askar, on a strategic level, were also successful. The level of resourcing available to the Ayyubid military was ramped up inexorably in the course of the decade prior to Hattin. Every Muslim state or principality that was absorbed into Saladin's new empire brought its own troops with it, and revenues that could be used to boost the army. While it was in expansionist mode, as it was in this decade, the entire war machine became a virtuous circle. More land, money and men meant more troops. More troops meant that the empire could expand still further. With every expansion, the Ayyubid war machine increased its capacity to damage the crusader states.

One obvious manifestation of this virtuous circle was the size of the armies which Saladin could routinely deploy. But it was not just in terms of numbers that the Ayyubid military improved. Alongside the quantitative changes, Saladin was looking to make a qualitative shift. This shift was manifested in different ways, each of which was only made possible by the growing resources of his empire. Morale and cohesion across the different parts of his new empire could be improved by a growing call for 'jihad' among his, often initially reluctant, subjects. Perhaps even more fundamentally, he was able to use the economic surplus of Egypt to finance the dismemberment of the old Fatimid army and create a new, Turkic 'askar-based 'Egyptian' army that was entirely loyal to him. Using this army as a core, he was able to then move on to capture all of Syria and project his authority into Upper Mesopotamia. As his powers stretched further north so he had increasing access to large numbers of Turkic mercenaries and auxiliaries, boosting the strength of his armies still further.

Not all of this worked. With the lazy perspective of hindsight, it is perhaps too easy to exaggerate the strength of Ayyubid military resources. The politics that underpinned the willing, and often less willing, participating principalities were (just) held in check by a strong leader. But it was always fragile. Muslim armies of the period

were similarly fragile constructs. A strong and respected leader like Saladin could wield them effectively, but they were never 'regular' or 'professional' troops in the same sense that, say, we might use the term with regard to a modern western army. Using them in the field, or even getting them to the field, was often as much of an art as a science.

In practice, much of this strategic effort was also wasted or, as events unfolded, unnecessary. Saladin made a very significant investment in the Egyptian navy, but it was no more successful under the Ayyubids than it had been under the Fatimids. Even without opposition from the large Italian fleets that had occasionally dominated the eastern Mediterranean in the early decades of the twelfth century, its performance was poor.

Similarly, the whole process of surrounding and attacking the crusader states, year after year, was hugely expensive for Saladin. Although the continual attacks on the economic infrastructure of the crusader states were logical, the results of that strategy are still unclear. The crusader states continued to receive (limited) resources and reinforcements from the west. Farms and small towns were rebuilt. And civil populations were generally able to seek shelter in the many castles and fortified towers which were spread across the Frankish lands, particularly in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, to which Saladin's raiders devoted most of their attention.

The Frankish armies did not buckle under the force being applied. On the contrary, the army raised for the Hattin campaign was the largest the Christians had been able to muster, even without the addition of the full contingents from Antioch and Tripoli. The influence of the semi-professional forces of the military orders was increasing rather than diminishing. Saladin's strategic actions were certainly putting the crusader states under pressure. They existed on a semi-permanent war footing, militarised to an extent unknown in Europe. Over time, that stress might have brought them to breaking point. But in the short to medium term at least, they rose to the challenge: crusader forces in the field were more numerous than ever, and their latest castles were state-of-the-art and easier to defend, even with relatively small, isolated garrisons.

Saladin worked hard to take control of his Muslim neighbours' resources. He used these resources to transform the kind of forces available to him. The new army that he created was a hybrid, one that combined some of the best elements from each of the enemies the crusaders had encountered during the first half of the twelfth century. From the Fatimids he took an appreciation of the benefits of having large, 'regular' forces, well equipped and, unlike most early Turkic armies, capable of staying in the field for more than just a few weeks.

He also valued the Fatimid practice of having a higher proportion of relatively heavy troops, cavalrymen who, in theory at least, were able to face the Franks in close combat.

But where the Fatimid Egyptian army lacked élan, Saladin sought to inject the best military traditions of the Turkic-Syrian city states. Their armies had high-quality troops from a nomadic heritage, hardened warriors able to harass the slower-moving crusader armies with their ferocious archery skills, but willing to come in for the kill when the time was right. Where the Fatimids lacked cultural cohesion in their polyglot armies, the new, hybrid, Ayyubid forces were overwhelmingly Sunni in their outlook and, for morale purposes, at least among the rank and file, focused on the destruction of a common enemy.

Saladin's new army was, of course, never perfect. But it brought together many of the best traits of its Muslim predecessors in the region, and combined this enhanced focus on quality with an ability to field large numbers of men, year after year. The Fatimids had an army which could exploit a victory, but rarely achieved it. The Turkic-Syrian states, on the other hand, had armies which could sometimes create a victory, but were ill-suited to exploit it. Saladin's Ayyubid forces were finally poised to do both. It was a formidable step forward.

Saladin also excelled in applying the operational and tactical lessons which he had learned after the Mont Gisard campaign. He was helped in this in 1187 by the clumsy performance of Guy of Lusignan, but that should not blind us to Saladin's achievements. Logistics were an area in which he had failed in 1177. In 1187 he would not only rectify that mistake, but also lure the Franks into making irredeemable logistical errors of their own.

Saladin was fielding a much larger army than the Franks and he was operating throughout in enemy territory. And yet he manoeuvred them so skilfully that he was always able to ensure that his men were well supplied. During the night of 3–4 July, while the Franks were without water and their situation was deteriorating with every passing hour, Saladin was able to bring up provisions for his men. He had preserved their access to water at all times, and arrangements were in place for fresh supplies to be brought up as the day progressed.

There was so much water available to the Muslim forces that it could even be used for propaganda purposes. At one point Saladin 'commanded caravans of camels loaded with water from the Sea of Tiberias to be brought up and had the water jars positioned near the [Frankish] camp. They were then emptied in the sight of the Christians with the result that they and their horses suffered even greater anguish through thirst.'[160] Once the Frankish army was

deprived of access to water, its military effectiveness naturally deteriorated. All Saladin had to do was sit back and wait for the inevitable.

Given that he was anxious to wear down the Frankish army before contact, archery was also important. Once again, his grasp of logistics showed that he had learned the lessons of Mont Gisard, and no fewer than 400 loads of arrows were brought up to the front ranks to ensure that there would be no let-up in the pressure on the Franks. The combined effects of dehydration, unbearable heat and the cumulative casualties caused by long-range archery, greatly degraded the effectiveness of the Frankish forces.[161]

The Frankish horses, in particular, were vulnerable to these tactics. Their lack of armour and the multitudes of Turkic horse archers left thousands of them horribly wounded. Without his horse, a Frankish knight made a formidable heavy infantryman, but surrounded and dehydrated, he could be picked off at leisure. Saladin's use of brushfires to exacerbate Guy's strategic and logistical errors was also extremely effective. Ibn al-Athir emphasised the impact this had, once the crusaders' march had ground to a halt. 'Some of the Muslim volunteer fighters had set fire to the ground there. The grass was abundant and the fire spread. The wind was against the Franks and it carried the heat and smoke of the fire towards them. Thirst, the hot weather, the heat of the fire, the smoke and the heat of battle all combined against them.'[162]

Saladin's crowning tactical achievement, however, was not a consequence of opportunistic activity on the battlefield, inspired though that was, but rather the ability he had created to deliver a huge army to the battlefield. This achievement, the culmination of years of fighting and endless campaigns against his fellow Muslims, allowed to to him to effectively 'swamp' the Franks once they had been manoeuvred into a difficult position.

Guy of Lusignan had a strong army; he and some of his advisers probably thought that they would be able to fight their way through to Tiberias. Even if that proved to be impossible, they may have thought that they would be able to retreat to their camp at Saffuriya, with its field defences and ample water supplies. In fact, neither was a real possibility. Saladin's troops were present in such overwhelming force that it was easy to surround the Franks and, once surrounded, the Christians would still be outnumbered, whichever way they turned.

Al-Afdal's account of the final stages of the battle is far more interesting than just an anecdote about his father's reactions. Even at this stage, dehydrated and demoralised, having taken massive casualties from skirmishing and archery, an attack by just 150

exhausted Frankish cavalry gave Saladin great cause for concern. Similarly, as the tired and outnumbered heavy cavalry of Raymond of Tripoli's vanguard charged towards Taqi al-Din's division, the 'askar flinched, either involuntarily or because it was thought wiser and safer to let the Franks pass through. No matter how much they were outnumbered, or how much they had been softened up, a charge by Frankish knights was always to be feared. There was a recognition, on the Muslim side as much as on the Christian, that even the heaviest elements of the 'askar were no match for the Frankish knights on a man-to-man basis.

At Hattin, the triumph of the Ayyubid war machine, Saladin's skill lay in putting all the conditions in place whereby, once Guy had made the fatal decision to move recklessly towards Tiberias, the Frankish knights were beaten before contact even took place.

CHAPTER 11

Endgame

The wars between Muslim states and those of the crusaders are often portrayed, rather simplistically, as early examples of the cultural fault-lines between the Islamic and Christian worlds. In the most extreme version of this view, and regardless of implausibility, crusading warfare is seen as an early instance of fighting between these two large religious and cultural blocs, and as still having a causal force even today. If relations between Islam and the west are poor, so this argument would run, the root causes of the problem must surely lie with the west. The attacks by the crusaders on the peaceful Muslim states of the Middle East sparked off a clash of cultures whose effects we are still living with today. It was western aggression, typified by the unprovoked actions of the crusading armies, that created the enduring enmity in the region between two of the great world religions.

This narrative creates a topical and satisfying explanation for how crusading warfare unfolded. As small groups of colonial oppressors, the crusaders were inevitably going to be isolated and outnumbered. As religious zealots and bigots, they were inevitably going to alienate the local population. Even the local Christians would hate them, increasing their isolation in the foreign lands they had invaded. As initiators of a cultural war between the west and Islam, the crusader armies inevitably reaped what they had sowed, and we are all, sadly, still living with the consequences of their aggression.

In fact, as we have seen, almost none of this is true, but its superficial plausibility makes it hard to dislodge from the popular imagination.

It is true that there was a large ‘colonialist’ element to crusading warfare, ironically, far more than most people realise. Substantial numbers of villages and towns were established by westerners in the crusader states, particularly in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. But the colonies generally seem to have been set up in cooperation with

local communities, rather than supplanting them.

Were the crusading armies the instigators of some far-reaching 'clash of civilisations'? The fact that the words 'crusade' and 'jihad' are now both so politically loaded is not helpful. But any kind of causal link is far too glib. The idea of 'jihad' was only used very sparingly by many Muslim rulers during the twelfth century, and even then, as much for propaganda and morale purposes as out of any profound religious sentiment.[1]

Labels

The crusades and crusading warfare are among the most unhelpfully politicised and distorted topics in history. This inevitably leads to some extremely misleading labelling, as we tend to describe the armies, the peoples, the states and even the religious issues at stake in ways that say more about our current perspectives than the historical context of the time.

The armies of all the main protagonists were led and dominated by migrant elites. The Franks were outsiders, but so too were almost all their equivalents in the neighbouring states. The reality of contemporary armies is full of contradictions. We find 'Muslim' armies with almost no Muslims in them, 'crusader' armies with very few crusaders, and Christian forces manoeuvring with most tactical commands being issued in Armenian or Arabic.

Contrary to expectations, the majority of the populations of the crusader states were still Christian in the twelfth century, rather than Muslim. And even among the Franks, after the first couple of decades, most of the 'Europeans' were mixed-race settlers who had never seen Europe. There were surprising levels of religious tolerance within the crusader states, not because they were naturally inclined towards some form of prescient liberalism, but because they needed cooperation and volunteers. This tolerance and mutuality of interest was reflected in the high proportion of local Christians in the 'crusader' armies of the period. The defence of the Holy Land was as much in the hands of the local communities as it was the Franks.

Strategy

The temptation is to write off medieval warfare as being unsophisticated and brutish but, as we have seen, most participants performed surprisingly well, given the limited resources at their disposal. Not all leaders were strategic geniuses and, even if they were, they certainly did not have the processes or infrastructure in place to allow them to enact any elaborate form of 'grand strategy'.

Despite the problems they faced, however, it is clear that most

contemporary commanders and their advisers had formed a clear idea of the strategy that was required: their ability to convert that strategic intent into practice was undoubtedly very constrained, but the limitations were imposed more by a lack of resources than, with a few notable exceptions, any lack of intelligence.

The armies operating in Syria, Palestine and Egypt knew what worked well and what did not, and reacted as quickly as possible to changing circumstances. Wars were generally conducted by thoughtful, intelligent leaders, with a sound intuitive grasp of strategy and planning, and an unusually refined focus upon warfare. Far from being a stationary, unthinking slugging match, there was a dynamic and adaptive military struggle unfolding throughout the century.

The 'Arms Race' of the Twelfth Century

Resources were at the core of that arms race. Each side was looking to increase the assets it had available, and then rushed to convert them into increased military capacity before its enemies could follow suit. There was a simultaneous drive to improve the effectiveness of that military capacity (qualitative improvements), as well as the numbers involved (quantitative improvements). There were three main aspects to the impetus to gather and consolidate resources. Externally, they could be accessed from outside the region. Internally, they could be better harnessed from within the region by, say, acting together more cooperatively. Finally, and less subtly, there was the 'land grab': resources that could be aggregated by knocking out one or more of the other key players and absorbing their assets.

'External' Assets

'External' assets could be vital, and both sides had access to resources from outside the region. The Muslim states were geographically bigger, and with larger populations, so the crusader states tended to be more dependent on external aid than their opponents. Help from the Christian states of Europe, whether Catholic or Orthodox, was certainly vital. There was the twice-annual influx of pilgrims and travellers from the west, some of whom might stay permanently, or serve on military expeditions, but all of whom could help the local economy and keep the links to the west alive. There were also occasional expeditions by large groups of crusaders. These could sometimes be turned to temporary military advantage and some of the men might be persuaded to put down roots in the Holy Land. There were visits by large fleets from the Italian city states and the north of Europe, particularly in the early decades of the twelfth century, which could help capture the Fatimid coastal cities and weaken the Egyptian

navy. There were irregular but sometimes substantial expeditions from Byzantium and Norman Sicily, all of which could provide temporary military assistance. And there was financial help from the west, often channelled eastwards by the networks of the Templars and the Hospitallers, which could be converted into volunteers, mercenaries, horses and upgraded fortifications.

Even though the Muslim states were larger, they also benefited from external help. Military aid could sometimes be provided to the local Turkic rulers by their nominal overlord in Baghdad and this underpinned the influx of new armies into the region, particularly in the first quarter of the century. The Fatimids in Egypt had access to manpower through their long-standing agreements with the Christian Nubian states to their south and had the potential to acquire pagan slaves from sub-Saharan Africa. They were also able to call on Armenian mercenaries from the north, dislocated by the Turkic invasions of Asia Minor.

More importantly, however, the winning combination of geography, heritage and money gave the Turkic regimes of Syria access to an almost limitless supply of high-quality horse archers, who could be tempted off the steppes with the certainty of an initial cash payment and the less certain but nonetheless attractive prospect of rich plunder. Their relatively consistent ability to source large numbers of hardened nomadic cavalry gave the Turkic states the tactical opportunity to achieve battlefield supremacy, and the exceptional mobility of these light cavalrymen created operational opportunities to cause havoc in the crusader states.

All of these external resources came at a price, even if that price was not always financial. The interventions of other states, such as Sicily, Byzantium or Baghdad, had strings attached, and were always uncontrollable to a greater or lesser extent, both in terms of timing and objectives. Visits by large groups of crusaders could often come at militarily inconvenient moments, and trying to negotiate sensible and achievable goals with them would try the patience of even the most diplomatic hosts. Similarly, for the Turkic-run states in Syria, large numbers of nomads were useful but hard to manage. If they were part of an army sent by Baghdad, they were almost as threatening, and often every bit as popular, as the neighbouring crusader states.

But out-of-region resources were always useful and, for the crusaders in particular, as their small states began to fall behind in the regional arms race, they were a vital supplement to their increasingly inadequate military assets.

'Internal' Assets

It was often easier said than done, but everyone knew that military

resources within the region could be harnessed more effectively by acting in close cooperation. The crusader states generally behaved in an accommodating way with each other, if only because they had little choice. Despite occasional quarrels between the different personalities and noble families, military relations between the Frankish powers were surprisingly efficient and harmonious. The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was generally recognised as having pre-eminence among them, and could usually be relied upon to come to the aid of the others. The protocol was that, in the event of Muslim invasion, messengers were immediately sent to get help from the other crusader states, and that help was normally forthcoming relatively quickly.

Similarly, although there were occasional signs of feudal unrest, such as the uprisings of Hugh of Le Puiset in 1134 or of Gerard of Sidon in 1160, these were far less common or significant than in comparable European societies.[2] Internecine warfare among the Christians was so unusual that one Muslim chronicle expressed astonishment when it happened, as 'they had not been wont to act like this'.[3] The Franks were a fairly well-disciplined and tightly knit group. This was not because they were intrinsically any less prickly or argumentative than their peers in Europe, but because they were under such significant external military pressure that there was rarely any viable alternative. The outnumbered crusader states could never afford too much disunity, so there was little extra benefit for them to extract in this field.

It was different for the Muslims. At the beginning of our period, the smaller Turkic-Syrian states could each only field relatively modest military forces, and even these were just as often forced to be diverted against their peers as against the Franks. These states did not have the centralised resources to build up specialist assets such as an effective siege train. Individually, they lacked both the critical mass to create success, and the means to exploit it even if they achieved a breakthrough.

As the century progressed, however, the Turkic Muslim powers ended up controlling increasingly disproportionate 'internal' resources. This partly reflected the larger territories and populations under their control. But even more important were the additional benefits they could extract from increasing cooperation, however involuntary this might be in practice. As they were forced to coalesce into larger economic and political units, armies could be created on a hitherto undreamed-of scale. 'Askars could become bigger and better equipped. Larger groups of nomadic mercenaries could be hired. Even specialist capabilities, such as a corps of miners, could be built up. Starting under Zengi, and continuing under Nur al-Din, the newly

imposed unity unleashed significant resources. These resources were almost immediately converted into military assets and activity. Muslim Syria started to achieve military critical mass.

'Land Grab' Assets

Apart from increased Muslim unity in Syria and access to nomadic horse archers, the other big prize, and the asset needed to power the final stages of the twelfth-century 'arms race', was the last remaining significant 'land grab': the resources controlled by the increasingly frail Fatimid regime in Egypt.

Everyone knew that Egypt was the strategic key, and everyone fought for possession of it or, at the very least, to deprive their opponents of it. The contest took up most of the military energy of the 1160s. On the Christian side, the main protagonist was the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, supported on an intermittent basis by the naval resources of Byzantium and Norman Sicily.

The Franks needed Egypt's land. The crusader states were small, and if their core knightly arm was to be expanded, they needed fiefs. There was no land left in Palestine, so Egypt's landed or money fiefs were essential if the most expensive and effective part of the crusader armies was going to be increased in numbers. More negatively, the Franks also needed to control Egypt if they were to avoid being surrounded. A resurgent and unified Turkic-controlled empire in the Middle East, stretching from Mesopotamia in the north, down to Egypt and Yemen in the south, would encircle the crusader states and make them vulnerable to simultaneous attacks on many fronts. The capture of Egypt would also give this new Muslim empire access to the Mediterranean and possession of a fleet, a series of naval bases and potentially valuable trading links.

The crusaders started well, capturing Ascalon, the last remaining Fatimid naval base in Palestine in 1153, and exerting increasing influence over Egyptian affairs in the 1160s, culminating in the occupation of Alexandria in 1167.

But it was not to be. The Franks might be able to take temporary possession of some parts of Egypt, but they never had the resources, particularly the manpower, to keep them. Although Egypt had been Christian prior to the Arab invasions, by the twelfth century most of the population, including the ruling class, had been Islamicised. Egypt could only be captured and retained by the Franks if they could bring overwhelming force to bear.

In the event, the Turkic-Syrian forces sent by Nur al-Din proved themselves to be the most capable troops on the ground. Under his generals Shirkuh and, latterly, Saladin, Egypt was gradually absorbed into this newly coalescing Muslim super-state. After a period of

consolidation, during which the old Fatimid army was destroyed and rebuilt in the likeness of a huge Turkic-Syrian ‘askar (roughly from 1169 to 1174), the new province was able to add its largesse, its navy and its strategic location to the Ayyubid war machine. At that point the arms race was effectively won, and a more united Muslim military could be wielded by Saladin.

It took time to crank up the war machine, to improve its cohesiveness and to upgrade its quality. But after the absorption of Egypt, the final outcome was looking extremely likely. Perhaps even inevitable.

This Matter Has Received Its Due

With the lion’s share of regional resources consolidated in the hands of an increasingly unified Muslim Middle East, the endgame had an air of desperation about it.

The resources available to the Franks were deployed as efficiently as possible. Money could be used to attract more mercenaries, and provide military equipment for farmers and urban militia. The military orders, with their semi-professionalised forces, could be given ever greater responsibilities on the frontiers. A new generation of castles could be constructed on the border marches, able to withstand sieges even with relatively small garrisons. But it was all very fragile.

The number of knights could not easily be increased, as there was so little land to give them as fiefs. Castles could hold out against invading armies, but they could not stop them destroying the countryside and the less well-defended towns. The army could be temporarily boosted in numbers, but only at the expense of quality, and even then in insufficient numbers to confidently meet Saladin’s giant new hybrid armies in the field. The Franks were tinkering as best they could around the edges of a problem that was rapidly becoming incapable of resolution.

The issues confronting the Franks were systemic rather than temporary. Even if Saladin were to die, it was likely that another Muslim hardman would appear, just as Zengi and Nur al-Din had done before him. The strategic situation facing the crusaders was arguably far more fundamental than anything which could be resolved by a convenient change of personalities.

The end of the Christian hinterlands came with the battle of Hattin. There were many things that Guy of Lusignan did wrong in the summer of 1187 and one can agonise about the ‘what ifs’ of history. But if defeat had not come then, it would probably have come soon after. There was a certain inevitability about the outcome and perhaps the most surprising thing is that the Franks managed to avoid it for as long as they did. One can certainly envisage circumstances, for

instance, where the hinterlands of the Latin Kingdom could have been permanently overrun even as far back as 1102, after the second battle of Ramla, or in 1113 in the aftermath of the Frankish defeat at as-Sennabra.

Survival for the Frankish inland possessions meant having everything in place, including a healthy dose of good luck, on a consistent basis. The Turkic powers, particularly once consolidated resources had been converted into the powerful hybrid armies of Saladin's Ayyubid empire, only needed to get lucky once.

The prime determinant of warfare in the Middle East in this period, the composition of the armies, the style of fighting and, ultimately, the outcome of the military struggle, was the balance of power between local sedentary and nomadic-heritage cultures. It is interesting to see how differently events played out when steppe migrants were not available in quantity. The Christian counter-attacks in the western Mediterranean, for instance, far from the point of entry for large numbers of nomadic cavalry, had a very good chance of success. Spain, Portugal, Sicily, southern France and Italy are now all taken for granted as being part of Europe, but it was only because of the success of those medieval counter-offensives that this is the case.

In the eastern Mediterranean, however, matters were far more difficult. Close to a major entry point from the Eurasian steppes, and attractive to an almost limitless supply of highly militarised nomadic migrants, the sedentary powers of the region had a much harder task. Primal demographic and geopolitical forces would outweigh the long-term defensive capabilities of sedentary powers, which existed in extraordinarily fragile ecosystems compared to those of their nomadic competitors. Victory on the battlefield brought temporary respite, but a single defeat could end in the destruction of their entire state. All the major established sedentary powers, the pre-Turkic Syrian city states, the crusaders and the Fatimid Egyptians fell to the remorseless logic of steppe demographics and the forces that propelled their people outwards.

After the disaster at Hattin, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem collapsed. Refugees from the north of the kingdom were sent in vulnerable columns up towards the remaining Christian strongholds in the County of Tripoli and beyond. Some settled there, in modern Lebanon, while others kept moving onwards, settling in Syria or Anatolia. Many survivors from the south of the kingdom made their way into Egypt. In an act of great magnanimity, the Muslim governor of Alexandria took good care of them and had an impromptu refugee camp built to house the bewildered Frankish civilians. He 'received them kindly and had palisades put around them and had them guarded day and night. He protected them in this fashion throughout

the winter.' After decades of brutality, there was still enough humanity left to take pity on the helpless. In an ironic reversal of roles, reluctant Italian merchants eventually had to be forced by the local Muslim authorities to carry those who had lost everything back to the west.[4]

Meanwhile, bizarrely, isolated elements of the Frankish army, beyond hope, and acting out of sheer bloody-mindedness, were still fighting. The garrisons of some of the bigger castles along the eastern and southern frontiers refused to surrender. The castles that held out were, of course, those that were strongest – the state-of-the-art fortifications that had been reinforced in the 1170s and 1180s to try to stabilise the borders.

But there was also an emotional angle to it. The list of the die-hard castles reads like a roll-call of those whose friends and comrades had been executed after having been taken prisoner at Hattin. At Kerak and Montréal, the garrisons of the Oultrejourdain were just as stubborn and aggressive as their charismatic liege-lord, Reynald of Châtillon, who had been hacked to death in Saladin's tent. The Templars at the castle of Safad, and the Hospitallers in their fortress at Belvoir, were among the few survivors of the military orders in the Latin Kingdom: almost all the other brethren had been killed in battle or executed in captivity by Saladin's men during the summer of 1187. These garrisons were full of men trying to make a point.

Reynald's men in Montréal held out for almost two years, and even then they only surrendered because they 'went blind as the result of not having any salt. They did not want to make the mistake of handing the castle over unnecessarily . . . Saladin repeatedly offered them plenty of money and a safe passage to Christian territory, but they would not accept.'[5]

The Hospitallers at Belvoir likewise held out far beyond rational expectations. After the first six months of the siege, the depleted garrison even decided to counter-attack. In a spectacular act of defiance, during a stormy night in January 1188, with the rain and lightning masking the sounds of their exit, they charged out and attacked their besiegers. They 'took them unawares, surprising them . . . killing their commander, one of the emirs called Sayf al-Din . . . and also seizing their weapons'. More to the point, they captured the Muslim food supplies and, by careful rationing, were able to make them last for another year.[6] Negotiations to try to get them out were tortuous. Even their besiegers, frustrated as they were, had a grudging admiration, and one quoted the garrison as saying: 'were only one of us left, the House of the Hospitallers would still be guarded'.[7] Out of supplies and with the walls about to be undermined, the last remaining Hospitallers eventually surrendered in January 1189,

eighteen months after the loss of the Frankish hinterlands. The dream of re-establishing Christian states in the Holy Land was gone.

As Richard I of England said when the Third Crusade arrived in the east: ‘The land is ruined, ruined utterly at the hands of both sides. Property and lives on both sides are destroyed. This matter has received its due.’[8] The crusaders and their armies did well within the bounds of the possible, but only ever had the resources to come up with small and temporary military answers to what were far bigger, systemic problems. The odds were always against them. Sooner or later, their luck was bound to fail.

CHRONOLOGY

Early 1000s Turkish conquest of most of Asia Minor
1095 Byzantine envoys ask Pope Urban II for help
18–28 November 1095 Council of Clermont preaching the First Crusade
March 1098 Baldwin of Boulogne takes over rule of Edessa
3 June 1098 Fall of Antioch to the crusaders
7 June 1099 Crusader ships occupy Jaffa
15 July 1099 Crusaders capture Jerusalem
22 July 1099 Election of Godfrey of Bouillon as ruler of Jerusalem
12 August 1099 Crusaders defeat the Egyptians at Ascalon
18 July 1100 Death of Godfrey of Bouillon
Early August 1100 Capture of Bohemond by the Danishmend Turk, Malik Ghazi
20 August 1100 Capture of Haifa by the Latins
2 October 1100 Baldwin of Boulogne departs from Edessa which he cedes to Baldwin of Bourcq
25 December 1100 Coronation of Baldwin of Boulogne as king of Jerusalem
c. 28 March 1101 Tancred dies
29 April 1101 Capture of Arsuf by the Latins
17 May 1101 Capture of Caesarea by the Latins
August–September 1101 Defeat of crusader forces in Asia Minor by Seljuk sultan, Kilij Arslan
7 September 1101 Baldwin defeats the Egyptians at the battle of Ramla
14 April 1102 Raymond of Toulouse defeats forces from Damascus and Homs near Tortosa
27 May 1102 Baldwin meets the Egyptians, finally defeating them near Jaffa
May 1103 Release of Bohemond
7–8 May 1104 Defeat of combined Christian forces at the battle of Harran, and capture of Baldwin of Bourcq and Joscelin of Courtenay
26 May 1104 Capture of Acre by the Latins
28 February 1105 Death of Raymond of Toulouse, who is succeeded by William-Jordan, Count of Cerdagne, his cousin
27 August 1105 Baldwin defeats the Egyptians at the third battle of Ramla
Mid-August 1108 Release of Baldwin of Bourcq
26 June 1109 Fall of Tripoli to the Latins
13 May 1110 Fall of Beirut to the Latins
5 December 1110 Fall of Sidon to the Latins
21 December 1112 Death of Tancred, leaving regency of Antioch to Roger of Salerno
15 February 1113 Grant of *Pia postulatio voluntatis* to the Hospitallers by Pope Paschal II

Battle of as-Sennabra
20 October 1113 Mawdud of Mosul
14 September 1115 Victory of Roger of Antioch over Bursuq, lord of Hamadhan, at the battle of Tell Danith
Establishment of the castle of Montréal (Shawbak)
22 March 1118 Latin forces under Baldwin I take al-Farama in the Nile Delta
2 April 1118 Death of Baldwin I
14 April 1118 Coronation of Baldwin of Bourcq as king of Jerusalem
28 June 1119 Defeat and death of Roger of Antioch at al-Atharib, 'the Field of Blood', by Il-Ghazi, ruler of Mardin
August/September 1119 Joscelin of Courtenay becomes count of Edessa
25 December 1119 Coronation of Baldwin II and Morphia
c. 1119 Beginnings of the Templars
6 January 1120 Council of Nablus
Death of al-Afdal, Egyptian vizier
1122–4 Venetian Crusade
13 September 1122 Capture of Joscelin of Courtenay by Nur al-Daulak Balak
3 November 1122 Death of Ghazi
29 May 1123 Latin forces defeated at Ibelin
18 April 1123 Capture of Baldwin II by Balak
8 August 1123 Escape of Joscelin of Courtenay from captivity
Death of Balak
February–July 1124 Siege and capture of Tyre by the Latins
14 August 1124 Release of Baldwin II
Failed siege of Aleppo by Baldwin II
September 1127 Zengi appointed governor of Mosul
1 February 1128 Death of Toghtigin of Damascus
Zengi captured Aleppo
3 June 1129 Marriage of Fulk of Anjou and Melisende of Jerusalem
Fulk and Melisende crowned as co-rulers of Jerusalem
1129 Fulk of Anjou
Assassination of Baldwin II
21 August 1131 Death of Baldwin II
Latins lose Banyas
Campaign of John Comnenus, Byzantine Emperor, in Cilicia and Antioch
August 1137 Defeat of Fulk at Montferrand by Zengi and loss of the town
April–May 1138 Failed attempt to take Shaizar by the Byzantines and the Latins
Zengi takes Homs
Pilgrimage of Thierry of Flanders
12 June 1140 Latins regain Banyas
Building of the castle of Kerak by Pagan the Butler
1142 Raymond II of Tripoli cedes Crac des Chevaliers to the Hospitallers
Autumn 1142 John Comnenus campaigns in Antioch and Edessa

8 April 1143 Death of John Comnenus
10 November 1143 Death of King Fulk
25 December 1143 Coronation of Melisende and Baldwin III
23–24 December 1144 Capture of Edessa by Zengi
14 September 1146 Death of Zengi
November–December 1146 Joscelin II and Baldwin II of Marash retake Edessa
Nur ad-Din, Zengi's second son, regains Edessa
May 1147 Unsuccessful invasion of the Hauran by Baldwin III
Arrival of Conrad III of Germany at Acre
24 June 1148 Assembly of the leaders of the Second Crusade at Palmarea
24–28 July 1148 Unsuccessful attack on Damascus by the forces of the Second Crusade
29 June 1149 Defeat and death of Raymond of Poitiers by Nur al-Din at the battle of Inab
May 1150 Capture of Joscelin II of Edessa
August 1150 Expulsion of the Latins from the County of Edessa
31 March 1152 Baldwin III's coronation
April 1152 Baldwin III seizes power and Melisende retires to Nablus
Spring 1153 Reynald of Châtillon marries Constance of Antioch
22 August 1153 Capture of Ascalon
25 April 1154 Nur ad-Din takes over Damascus
1155 Reynald of Châtillon attacks Byzantine Cyprus
29 June 1157 Defeat of Baldwin III at Jacob's Ford by Nur al-Din
Third expedition of Thierry of Flanders
Early 1161 Campaign of Baldwin III to al-Arish
11 September 1161 Death of Queen Melisende
November 1161 Capture of Reynald of Châtillon by Majd al-Din of Aleppo
10 February 1163 Death of Baldwin III
18 February 1163 Coronation of King Amalric
1163 Bohemond III gains power in Antioch
September 1163 Siege of King Amalric to Egypt
August–October 1164 Amalric's second Egyptian campaign
30 August 1164 Battle of Artah
12 August 1164 Capture of Harim by Nur al-Din
18 October 1164 Capture of Banyas by Nur al-Din
Amalric's third Egyptian campaign
August 1167 Occupation of Alexandria
October 1168 Amalric's fourth Egyptian campaign
23 March 1169 Death of Shirkuh
October 1169 Amalric's fifth Egyptian campaign
29 June 1170 Major earthquake in Syria
1170 Major rebuilding of Crac des Chevaliers
10 September 1171 Solemn Egyptian allegiance to the Abbasid Caliphate
1173 Murder of the Assassin envoy by the Templars
15 May 1174 Death of Nur al-Din

11 July 1174	Death of Amalric
15 July 1174	Coronation of Baldwin IV
25 August 1174	Death of Nur al-Din
28 October 1174	Saladin enters Damascus
29 August 1176	Battle of Mont Gisard
25 November 1177	Release of Reynald of Châtillon and Joscelin of Courtenay from Muslim captivity
1 April 1178	Crusade of Philip of Alsace, Count of Flanders
25 November 1177	Battle of Mont Gisard
10 June 1179	Victory of Saladin over Latin forces at Marj Ayun
24–29 August 1179	Destruction of the castle at Jacob's Ford by Saladin
April 1180	Marriage of Sibylla of Jerusalem and Guy of Lusignan
May 1180	Truce between Saladin and Baldwin IV
February 1183	Coronation and levy of an extraordinary general tax in the kingdom of Jerusalem
1183	Reynald of Châtillon's ships attack Aqaba and Aydhab on the Red Sea
11 June 1183	Saladin gains control of Aleppo
September–October 1183	Standoff between the armies of Saladin and Guy of Lusignan in Galilee
20 November 1183	Guy of Lusignan removed as *bailli*
November 1183	Baldwin V crowned co-ruler
July 1184–July 1185	Embassy of the patriarch and the masters of the military orders to the west
Early April 1185	Raymond of Tripoli reappointed *bailli*
Spring 1185	Raymond of Tripoli makes four-year truce with Saladin
15 April 1185	Probable date of the death of Baldwin IV
Late summer 1186	Death of Baldwin V and coronation of Sibylla and Guy
Early 1187	Attack by Reynald of Châtillon on a Muslim caravan, breaking the truce
February 1187	Hospitallers purchase the castle of Marqab
1 May 1187	Battle of the Springs of Cresson
4 July 1187	Battle of Hattin

Adapted with kind permission from M. Barber, *The Crusader States*, London, 2012.

ABBREVIATIONS OF MAJOR SOURCES

Alb Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, ed. and tr. S.B. Edgington, Oxford, 2007.

Ambroise Ambroise, *The History of the Holy War*, ed. and tr. M. Ailes and M. Barber, 2 vols, Woodbridge, 2003.

Anna Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad*, tr. E.R.A. Sewter, London, 2009.

AS Abu Shama, *Le Livre des Deux Jardins*, in *RHCr Or.*, vols 4 and 5, Paris, 1898.

BD Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad, *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, tr. D.S. Richards, Crusade Texts in Translation 7, Aldershot, 2001.

FC Fulcher of Chartres, *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095–1127*, tr. F. Ryan, ed. H. Fink, Knoxville, 1969.

GF *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, ed. and tr. R. Hill, London, 1962.

GN Guibert of Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos*, tr. R. Levine, Woodbridge, 1997.

IA Ibn al-Athir, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fī'l-Ta'rīkh*, parts 1 and 2, tr. D.S. Richards, Crusade Texts in Translation 13 and 15, Aldershot, 2006, 2007.

IJ *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, tr. R.J.C. Broadhurst, London, 1952.

Itin *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, tr. H. Nicholson, Crusade Texts in Translation 3, Aldershot, 1997.

KD RHCr Or. Kamal ed-Din, *Extraits de la Chronique d'Alep par Kemal ed-Din*, in *RHCr Or.*, vol. 3, Paris, 1872, pp. 571–690.

KD RHCr Occ. Kamal al-Din, *L'Histoire d'Alep*, tr. E. Blochet, *Revue de l'Orient Latin*, 3 (1895), pp. 509–654, 4 (1896), pp. 145–225.

L&J Lyons, M.C. and D.E.P. Jackson, *Saladin: The Politics of the Holy War*, Cambridge, 1982.

Libellus *Libellus de expugnatione Terrae Sanctae per Saladinum*, ed. J. Stevenson, RS 66, London, 1875, pp. 209–62. For a translation, see *The Crusades: A Documentary Survey*, pp. 153–63, tr. J.A. Brundage, Wisconsin, 1962.

Mat Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia and the Crusades. Tenth to the Twelfth Centuries: The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, tr. A. Dostourian, Lanham, 1993.

MS Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite*

d'Antioche (1166–1199), ed. and tr. J.-B. Chabot, vol. 3, Paris, 1905.
Odo Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem*, ed. and tr. V.G. Berry, New York, 1948.
Pringle, D. IV Pringle, D., *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Corpus*, 4 vols, Cambridge, 1993–2009.
Pringle, Sec. Pringle, D., *Secular Buildings in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: An Archaeological Gazetteer*, Cambridge, 1997.
Qal. Ibn al-Qalanisi, *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades*, tr. H.A.R. Gibb, London, 1932.
Ray Raymond d'Aguilers, *Historia Francorum Qui Ceperunt Iherusalem*, tr. J.H. Hill and H.H. Hill, Philadelphia, 1968.
Ralph Ralph of Caen, *Gesta Tancredi*, tr. B.S. Bachrach and D.S. Bachrach, Crusade Texts in Translation 12, Aldershot, 2005.
RHC Occ. *Recueil des historiens des croisades* (*Collection of the Historians of the Crusades*), *Historiens occidentaux* (*Western Historians*), 5 vols, Paris, 1844–95.
RHC Or. *Recueil des historiens des croisades* (*Collection of the Historians of the Crusades*), *Historiens orientaux* (*Eastern Historians*), 5 vols, Paris, 1872–1906.
RRH *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani 1097–1291*, comp. R. Rohricht, Innsbruck, 1893. *Additamentum*, 1904.
RRH Online Revised Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani Database [online].
Rule *The Rule of the Templars – The French Text of the Rule of the Order of the Knights Templar*, tr. J.M. Upton-Ward, Woodbridge, 1992.
Usama Usama ibn Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation*, tr. P.M. Cobb, London, 2008.
WC Walter the Chancellor, *The Antiochene Wars*, tr. T.S. Asbridge and S.B. Edgington, Crusade Texts in Translation 4, Aldershot, 1999.
William William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds done beyond the Sea*, tr. E.A. Babcock and A.C. Krey, 2 vols, Records of Civilization, Sources and Studies 35, New York, 1943.
WT Conq. *William of Tyre: Conquest of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade: Sources in Translation*, tr. P.W. Edbury, Aldershot, 1996.

NOTES

Foreword

1.
This book is aimed at the general reader, so references to primary sources are to translations in modern languages wherever possible. The original language sources are also included in the bibliography for those who want to pursue them.

1 A Primal Social War

1.
Hillenbrand 1981, pp. 250–92.
2.
WC, p. 127.
3.
WC, pp. 127–8.
4.
WC, p. 131.
5.
See Riley-Smith 1978; France 2014a; Friedman 2011.
6.
The term ‘Turkic’ is generally used in this book, to avoid confusing the steppe warriors with the ethnically (and often geographically) very different people we would describe today as being ‘Turkish’.
7.
Murray 1995; Jotischky 2008; Morton 2016, pp. 111–54.
8.
See, for example, L&J, pp. 71–251 for the remorseless build-up of the Ayyubid armed forces.
9.
Ellenblum 2012; Brett 2014a, pp. 285–302.
10.
Tyerman 2006, pp. 11–12 and 126–9.
11.
Cobb 2014, pp. 78–9.
12.
Cobb 2014, pp. 79–81.
13.
Tyerman 2006, pp. 12–13.
14.
Tyerman 2006, pp. 128–9.
15.
See, for example, Hillenbrand 1999; Nicolle 1996b, 1999 and 2007.
16.
Ellenblum 2012, pp. 32–6.

17.
Ellenblum 2012, pp. 23–31.
18.
See Ellenblum 2012 and Heather 2005 and 2009, pp. 207–27.
19.
See Ellenblum 2012 for the evidence and the consequences for local communities.
20.
Cobb 2014, pp. 78–86; Frankopan 2012; Hillenbrand 1999, pp. 31–88; Brett 2014a, pp. 285–302.
21.
Hillenbrand 1981 and 1999, pp. 79–81.
22.
ME in WC, p. 188.
23.
IA I, p. 204.
24.
WC, p. 130.
25.
See, for example, Hillenbrand 1999, pp. 89–170, and particularly Hillenbrand 2001 for the career of Zengi.
26.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 231–9.
27.
Hoch 1992, pp. 119–28.
28.
L&J, pp. 6–120.

29.
IA II, p. 319; L&J, p. 252; AS *RHCr Or.* IV, p. 263.
30.
Libellus, p. 154.
31.
Imad ad-Din in Gabrieli 1969, pp. 129–30.

2 The 'Eastern Front' of Medieval Warfare

1.
This chapter owes a debt to Smail 1956, pp. 18–39 and to John France's work, particularly 'Crusading warfare and its adaptation to eastern conditions in the twelfth century' (2000) and 'Warfare in the Mediterranean region in the age of the crusades' (2011b).
2.
Gillingham 2007, pp. 1–15.
3.
See Barber 2001 for the impact of cultural mismatch on the behaviour of medieval armies, in this case focusing on the Albigensian crusades, and Clendinnen 1990 for the even more extreme example of European warfare in Mexico.
4.
WC, p. 132.
5.
Usama, p. 88.

6.
WC, p. 132.
7.
WC, p. 160.
8.
WC, p. 161.
9.
WC, p. 163.
10.
WC, p. 168.
11.
Usama, p. 131; Hillenbrand 1981.
12.
ME, p. 193.
13.
Barber 2012, pp. 180–3.
14.
Pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, 1187–1291, tr. D. Pringle, 2012, pp. 102–23.
15.
See France 2000, 2011b and 2014c.
16.
Tibble 1989.
17.
Diamond 2012.
18.
Hamblin 1985; see chapter 8, 'War with Egyptians'.
19.
Harari 1997.
20.
Hamblin 1985; Forey 2008; Barber 1992.
21.
See Barber 2012, pp. 26–31 for an overview of regional geography and its strategic implications; Smail 1956, pp. 18–39, 204–44.
22.
Ellenblum 1998, pp. 277–87.
23.
Barber 2012, pp. 231–61.
24.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 217–30.
25.
Phillips 1996 for Frankish diplomatic initiatives in the period.
26.
France 2000 and 2011b.
27.
WC, p. 126; IA I, p. 204.
28.
WC, p. 126.
29.
Nicolle 2007; France 2000.
30.
Harari 1997.
31.

Rule, pp. 58–60; Bennett 1992; France 2000.

32.
France 2000 and 2014c.

33.
BD, pp. 135–7.

34.
Morton 2014, pp. 47–8 and 60–2.

35.
Morton 2014 and 2016, pp. 111–35.

36.
Cobb 2009, pp. 1–24.

37.
L&J, p. 142.

38.
France 2000, pp. 51–2.

39.
Harari 1997.

40.
Barber 1992 and 1994a, pp. 64–114; Forey 1984a.

41.
Nicholson 1998, pp. 117–18 and 2004a, p. 48.

42.
IA II, p. 253.

43.
See *Rule*, and particularly the appendix, pp. 175–88, by Matthew Bennett, 'La Règle du Temple as a military manual'; see Bennett 1992.

44.
Riley-Smith 2012, pp. 27–37; Barber 1994a, pp. 64–114.

45.
WT Cont., p. 161; *Libellus*, pp. 157–8.

46.
Ellenblum 2007b; Pringle 1997 and 2013a; Kennedy 1994.

47.
Eddé 2011, pp. 72–5 and 82–3.

48.
Boas 1999, pp. 12–59; Prawer 1972, pp. 383–402.

49.
Murray 2008, pp. 275–86.

50.
Barber 2012, pp. 279–80.

51.
Kedar 1974, pp. 339–45.

52.
Barber 1992; Forey 2008.

53.
Schenk 2008, pp. 79–82.

54.
Riley-Smith 2012, pp. 27–37; Barber 1994a, pp. 94–5.

55.
Forey 2008; Schenk 2008.

56.
See Barber, M. and K. Bate tr., *Letters from the East*, 2010.

57.
Phillips 2007a, pp. 207–27; Forey 1984b, pp. 12–23; Loud 2005, pp. 1–14.
58.
Barber 2012, pp. 211–12.
59.
Phillips 2007a, pp. 195–202; OD, pp. 124–5.
60.
Barber 1992 and 1994b, pp. 448–51.
61.
France 1999, pp. 235–41; France 2015b, pp. 251–71.
62.
L&J, pp. 201–41.

3 Asymmetry and Intensity

1.
See Smail 1956, pp. 140–56 for campaigns fought without battle.
2.
Riley-Smith 1978.
3.
Smail 1956, pp. 138–40.
4.
Clendinnen 1990, pp. 87–130.
5.
Barber 2001; Nicolle 2007.
6.
Hamblin 1985; Brett 1995 and 2017, pp. 233–7.
7.
Barber 2012, pp. 69–71; Brett 1995; France 1994, pp. 357–65.
8.
Smail 1956, pp. 83–7; Hamblin 1985.
9.
Hillenbrand 1999, pp. 544–5.
10.
Usama, and Cobb 2009.
11.
Nicolle 1994, p. 7.
12.
Barber 2012, pp. 138–9.
13.
Usama, p. 52.
14.
Nicolle 1994.
15.
Usama, p. 52; Nicolle 2007, pp. 155–8.
16.
Nicolle 1996a, pp. 156–7, 2007, pp. 126–7, 141 and 159–62.
17.
See chapter 5 (‘The Soldiers’) for a more detailed discussion about the role of the Turcopoles.
18.
Usama, pp. 50–2.
19.

Usama, p. 50.
20.
Usama, p. 50.
21.
Usama, p. 50.
22.
Usama, pp. 50–1.
23.
Usama, p. 51.
24.
D.J.V. Fisher, my undergraduate supervisor and, coincidentally, a close friend of R.C. 'Otto' Smail, once told me that as a junior officer in the Second World War, leading a platoon of about 30 men around the Mediterranean, he could rely on no more than perhaps two NCOs and one or two men to manoeuvre in the face of the enemy. Unlike in the movies, everyone else would wait around to make sure it was safe before they even considered leaving cover.
25.
Usama, p. 52.
26.
Usama, p. 36.
27.
Usama, pp. 37–8.

4 The People

1.
This chapter draws very heavily on two major studies which have revolutionised the way we look at demography and community relations in the crusader states. First, in 1998 Ronnie Ellenblum published his superb re-evaluation of the Frankish colonisation programme, *Frankish Rural Settlement in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*. This research showed the hitherto unknown intensity of crusader rural colonisation and shed light on the positive relationships they generally seem to have enjoyed with local Christian communities. It also gave major insights into how settlement patterns were affected by the presence of local Muslim villages, and the ways in which nomadic incursions impinged on the density and distribution of all parts of the sedentary population, regardless of their religious beliefs: all of this has significant military implications, which we examine in more detail in later chapters. Second, in 2008 Christopher MacEvitt produced a groundbreaking study into the role of the local Christians within the crusader states (particularly the northern states), and the relationships between them and the Franks: *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*. This greatly improved our understanding of the part which local Christians played in society (greater than previously assumed), and the nature of their relationships with the Franks (often more cordial than we had imagined). See also Smail 1956, pp. 40–63.
2.
Barber 2012, pp. 54–5; France 1994, pp. 356–66.
3.
RC, p. 155.
4.
Barber, M. and K. Bate tr., *Letters from the East*, 2010.
5.

Hamilton 1994; Boas 2001, pp. 8–20.
6.
Barber 2012, pp. 218–20.
7.
WT II, p. 428.
8.
Kedar 1999, pp. 324–5.
9.
Barber 2012, p. 131.
10.
BD, p. 174.
11.
MacEvitt 2008, p. 37.
12.
Barber 2012, pp. 40–5, and conversations with the author.
13.
Barber 2012, pp. 40–4; MacEvitt 2008, pp. 7–49; MacEvitt 2004.
14.
France, J. and N. Morton 2014; Morton 2016, pp. 111–89.
15.
Ellenblum 1998.
16.
Libellus, p. 158.
17.
Riley-Smith 2002a, pp. 121–31; MacEvitt 2008, pp. 21–6; Hamilton 2000, pp. 166–7; Jotischky 2003, pp. 1–19; Murray 1995, pp. 59–73 and 2013, pp. 291–309.
18.
MacEvitt 2008, pp. 22–3.
19.
Michael the Syrian in MacEvitt 2008, p. 25.
20.
WT I, p. 536.
21.
Barber 2012, pp. 129–32; WT I, pp. 535–6; MacEvitt 2008, pp. 19–20.
22.
Murray 2000, pp. 185–6; MacEvitt 2008, p. 25.
23.
MacEvitt 2008, p. 77; Murray 2000, p. 214.
24.
FC, pp. 271–2.
25.
Tsurtsumia 2012, pp. 318–34; Pahlitzsch 2003, pp. 35–51.
26.
Barber 2012, p. 42.
27.
MacEvitt 2008, pp. 9 and 25; Dedeyan 1997; Hodgson 2011, pp. 83–107.
28.
Murray 2000, p. 186; MacEvitt 2008, p. 77.
29.
FC, p. 88; *GF*, pp. 25–7; KD *RHCr Or.* III, pp. 579–80; MacEvitt 2008, pp. 63–4 and 88–9; Asbridge 2000, pp. 28–30; Phillips 2007b, pp. 39–50.
30.

L&J, p. 275.
31.
WT I, p. 241.
32.
Usama, p. 115.
33.
Usama, p. 116.
34.
Murray 2000, p. 214.
35.
RRH nos 115, 237, 369 and 391.
36.
Eddé 2011, pp. 38–60.
37.
Eddé 2011, p. 52.
38.
WT II, p. 10; Barber 2012, pp. 141–2; Rogers 1992, pp. 82–3.
39.
WT II, p. 15–6.
40.
Matthew of Edessa in WC, pp. 188–9.
41.
WC, pp. 128 and 189.
42.
WC, p. 131.
43.
Barber 2012, pp. 138–9; Harari 2007a, p. 74.
44.
Harari 2007a, p. 77.
45.
Harari 2007a, p. 77.
46.
Harari 2007a, pp. 78–81.
47.
Harari 2007a, pp. 86–8 and p. 90.
48.
Barber 2012, p. 43.
49.
WT II, pp. 458–9.
50.
Hamilton 2000, pp. 166–7.
51.
Barber 2012, p. 40.
52.
MacEvitt 2008, p. 8.
53.
MacEvitt 2008, p. 37.
54.
MacEvitt 2008, p. 99; Pringle I, pp. 95–101; MacEvitt 2008, pp. 112–15. *RRH* no. 502. For the example of Gaza see Pringle I, pp. 208–20.
55.
MacEvitt 2008, pp. 125–6; Pringle I, pp. 63–4; Murray 2000, p. 186. Queen Melisende's mother, Morphia, was an Armenian, but a member of the Greek

Orthodox (Melkite) minority.

56.
Many villages around Jerusalem, for instance, show evidence of mixed Christian communities and shared communal spaces. See MacEvitt 2008, p. 129, Pringle II, pp. 339–44, Pringle Sec., pp. 98–9 and Ellenblum 1998, pp. 125–8.
57.
MacEvitt 2008, pp. 9, 123–4 and 134–5; Barber 2012, p. 43.
58.
RRH nos 299 and 332.
59.
MacEvitt 2008, p. 154.
60.
RRH nos 100 and 423.
61.
See Riley-Smith 1973a, p. 10 and MacEvitt 2008, p. 154.
62.
RRH nos 612, 630, 647 and 649.
63.
RRH no. 212.
64.
WT II, p. 470; Nicolle 1988, pp. 113–40; Ellenblum 1998, pp. 141–2; Tibble 1989, p. 165; Pringle I, p. 26.
65.
WT II, p. 470.
66.
WT II, p. 471.
67.
IJ, pp. 316–17; see also, for example, Rabei Khamisy's important new study of Frankish colonisation in Upper Galilee (Khamisy 2016).
68.
Ellenblum 1998.
69.
Riley-Smith 2003, pp. 13–27.
70.
FC, pp. 143–4; AA, pp. 542–3.
71.
Murray 2000, pp. 107–10.
72.
RRH no. 74; Barber 2012, p. 54; Pringle 1985, pp. 147–8.
73.
Ellenblum 1998, p. 282; Boas 2010 for a gazetteer of Frankish domestic sites in the crusader states.
74.
Ellenblum 1998, p. 284; Boas 2007 for an examination of the evolution of defensive structures in Frankish settlements.
75.
Jerusalem Pilgrimage, 1099–1185, ed. J. Wilkinson 1988, p. 197.
76.
Ellenblum 1998, pp. 103–9.
77.
Pringle II, pp. 329–332.
78.

For other examples see Ellenblum 1998, pp. 120–5 and Pringle II, pp. 339–44.
79.
Ellenblum 1998, pp. 73–85; Pringle I, pp. 161–5.
80.
FC, pp. 265–6.
81.
RRH no. 124.
82.
Barber 2012, pp. 256–7.
83.
WT II, p. 374.
84.
WT II, p. 375.
85.
Ellenblum 1998, p. 283.
86.
Ellenblum 1996a, pp. 104–122; Ellenblum 1998, pp. 41–5; Pringle II, p. 30.
87.
Ellenblum 1998, pp. 45–6; Khamisy 2013, pp. 13–52.
88.
Pringle I, pp. 194–6.
89.
WT II, p. 389.
90.
WT II, pp. 499–501; see Marshall 1992 for thirteenth-century examples.
91.
Barber 2012, p. 95.
92.
Barber 2012, pp. 218–20. Though note that Pringle 1990–1, p. 106 suggests that the population could have been as high as 30,000.
93.
Riley-Smith 2014.
94.
Conversations with Malcolm Barber.
95.
IJ, pp. 313–19.
96.
WT I, p. 221.

5 The Soldiers

1.
WT II, pp. 155–6.
2.
See Smail 1956, pp. 88–137 for a discussion of the issues covered in this chapter.
3.
Edbury 1997a, pp. 127–200; Edbury 1977, pp. 343–4.
4.
Barber 2012, pp. 196–7.
5.
Smail 1956, pp. 89–90.
6.

Edbury 1997b, p. 140.

7.
Somewhere between 670 and 677, depending on which manuscript you believe and how you do the maths; Edbury 1997a, p. 133; Smail 1956, p. 89.

8.
Edbury 1997b, p. 131; *Le Cartulaire du Chapitre du Saint-Sépulchre de Jérusalem*, no. 47.

9.
Nicolle 1996a, p. 24.

10.
Anna, p. 377.

11.
Orderic Vitalis vol. 2, pp. 22–31, vol. 6, pp. 240–1; see Mitchell 2006.

12.
Rule, p. 53.

13.
Peirce 1986, pp. 159–60.

14.
Peirce 1986, p. 156.

15.
Peirce 1993, pp. 258–61.

16.
Peirce 1986, pp. 155–6.

17.
Peirce 1986, p. 158.

18.
Peirce 1986, pp. 158–9; Peirce 1993, p. 252.

19.
Mitchell et al. 2006, pp. 145–55.

20.
Peirce 1986, p. 160.

21.
Peirce 1993, pp. 256–8; Nicholson 2004a, pp. 27–8.

22.
Conversation with Adrian Boas; Jones 2008, pp. 154–67.

23.
Peirce 1986, pp. 162–3.

24.
Itin., p. 181.

25.
WT II, pp. 211–12.

26.
See Attiya 1999 for Frankish knowledge of Arabic.

27.
Rule, p. 146.

28.
Peirce 1986, pp. 152–3.

29.
Anna, p. 377.

30.
Nicolle 2001, p. 45.

31.

Ambroise, pp. 129–30.
32.
Itin., p. 309.
33.
FC, p. 156.
34.
Rule, p. 63.
35.
Rule, p. 63.
36.
Rule, p. 63.
37.
Itin., pp. 331–2; see also Ambroise, pp. 165–6.
38.
Itin., p. 215; Ambroise, p. 101.
39.
Edbury 1997b, pp. 127–200; Edbury 1977, pp. 328–356.
40.
Edbury 1997b, pp. 199–200.
41.
Depending on manuscripts and how one adds up the sub-totals, the number lies somewhere between 5,025 and 5,175; Edbury 1997b, p. 133.
42.
Edbury 1997b, pp. 199–200.
43.
Edbury 1997b, p. 132.
44.
Edbury 1997b, pp. 132–4; Smail 1956, pp. 90–2; Tibble 1989, p. 2.
45.
WT II, pp. 374–5.
46.
Riley-Smith 2003.
47.
Smail 1956, pp. 110–11.
48.
FC, p. 172.
49.
FC, p. 185.
50.
WT I, p. 465.
51.
WT II, p. 167.
52.
Rule, p. 35.
53.
Nicholson 2004a, p. 26.
54.
Nicholson 2004a, pp. 29–30; *Rule*, p. 54.
55.
Rule, p. 63.
56.
Rule, p. 61.
57.

This section draws heavily on the excellent study of the Turcopoles by Yuval Noah Harari, 1997, which completely re-evaluates their importance, presence and function in crusader armies.

58.
Harari 1997, pp. 76–7; Savvides 1993, p. 123.

59.
Harari 1997, pp. 76–7.

60.
Edbury 1977, p. 338; Smail 1956, pp. 112–13.

61.
Rule, p. 102.

62.
Harari 1997, pp. 79–86.

63.
Usama, p. 61.

64.
WT II, pp. 350–1; *RRH* no. 452; Harari 1997, pp. 79–86.

65.
WC, p. 103.

66.
WC, p. 127.

67.
Rule, p. 61.

68.
Itin., p. 311.

69.
Rule, p. 61.

70.
WT II, p. 477.

71.
Harari 1997, pp. 91–2.

72.
Rule, pp. 61 and 158.

73.
Ambroise, pp. 170–1; Barber 2012, p. 352.

74.
Harari 1997, pp. 94–6; Ambroise, pp. 170–3; *Itin.*, pp. 339–43; BD, pp. 206–9.

75.
France 2014c and 1999, pp. 64–76; Smail 1956, pp. 115–20.

76.
See, for instance, France 2010; Bachrach 2004; Marvin 1998; Settia 2008.

77.
OD, pp. 94–5.

78.
See France 1994 for the army's march and the cumulative experience of the infantry.

79.
Itin., p. 104.

80.
BD, p. 170.

81.
Nicholson 2004a, p. 29.

82.
FC, p. 168.
83.
FC, p. 173.
84.
BD, p. 170.
85.
Itin., p. 249.
86.
Itin., p. 248.
87.
Tyerman 2013; Murray 2008.
88.
Marshall 2003, pp. 60–79.
89.
WT II, p. 218.
90.
Edbury 1977, pp. 339–40; Barber 2008, pp. 111–19.
91.
WT I, p. 496.
92.
FC, p. 255.
93.
WT II, p. 14.
94.
See, for example, Barber 2012, pp. 111–12.
95.
WT II, p. 74; Grabois 1970.
96.
WT II, p. 487.

6 The Frankish Army in the Field

1.
For the performance of the Frankish army in the field see also Smail 1956, pp. 138–203.
2.
Anna, p. 378.
3.
Anna, p. 313.
4.
Qal., pp. 176–7.
5.
Qal., pp. 284–5.
6.
Qal., p. 292.
7.
Peirce 1986, pp. 161–2.
8.
Anna, p. 313.
9.
WC, p. 127.
10.

Orderic Vitalis vol. 6, pp. 238–9.
11.
France 2014c, p. 159.
12.
Nicolle 2001, pp. 30–1; France 2000, pp. 50–2 and 59–61; France 2011b, pp. 9–10.
13.
Nicholson 2004a, pp. 24–6.
14.
Rule, p. 59.
15.
See the appendix of *Rule*, pp. 175–88 for Matthew Bennett's wonderful interpretation of the implications for dispositions and combat: 'La Règle du Temple as a military manual or how to deliver a cavalry charge'; Bennett 1992.
16.
Nicholson 2004a, pp. 45–6.
17.
WC, p. 117.
18.
For a detailed discussion of the 'fighting march' see Smail 1956, pp. 156–65 and Bennett 2001, pp. 1–18.
19.
Anna, p. 439; Bennett 2001, pp. 1–18.
20.
Anna, p. 440.
21.
Anna, p. 451.
22.
WT II, p. 307; Barber 2012, p. 241.
23.
WT II, p. 307.
24.
See Buck 2017, pp. 41–4 for the importance of Harim; Barber 2012, p. 240; Barber, M. and K. Bate tr., *The Templars*, 2002, pp. 97–9; *RRH* no. 404.
25.
Barber 2012, pp. 195–6.
26.
WT II, p. 209.
27.
WT II, p. 210.
28.
WT II, p. 211.
29.
WT II, p. 211.

30.
Itin., p. 247; Barber 2012, pp. 348–9; Ehrlich 2014, pp. 109–18.
31.
Ambroise, p. 111.
32.
Ambroise, p. 111.
33.
The True Cross was no longer available by the time of the Third Crusade,

having been lost at the battle of Hattin, but King Richard's banner acted as a secular substitute; Murray 1998; Gerish 1996, pp. 137–55; Ligato 1996, pp. 315–30.
34.
Itin., p. 237.
35.
Itin., p. 237.
36.
Itin., p. 249.
37.
Itin., p. 250.
38.
Itin., p. 251.
39.
See *Itin.*, pp. 252–3.
40.
See Bennett 2017; Kedar 2015.
41.
Itin., p. 253.
42.
Itin., p. 255.
43.
Itin., p. 255.
44.
BD, p. 175.
45.
Barber 2012, p. 349.
46.
AA, pp. 662–3; Murray 2000, p. 224.
47.
Itin., p. 246.
48.
Barber 2012, p. 353.
49.
Itin., p. 359.
50.
Itin., p. 361; Pringle I, pp. 268–9 for topography.
51.
Itin., p. 362; Ambroise, p. 183.
52.
Ralph of Coggeshall ed. Stevenson, pp. 44–51.
53.
BD, p. 171.
54.
WC, p. 114.
55.
Itin., p. 363; Ralph of Coggeshall ed. Stevenson, p. 47.
56.
Itin., p. 363.

7 Frontiers, Castles and Sieges

1.

AA, pp. 726–35; Pringle Sec., pp. 231–2. This chapter owes a particular debt to Ronnie Ellenblum's analysis of crusader castle development (1996b and 2007b); to Denys Pringle's many publications; to Michael Fulton's ground-breaking examination of the role of artillery (2015 and forthcoming book); and to Rabei Khamisy's work on mining in Muslim armies (2015).

2.
AA, pp. 730–3; Murray 2000, pp. 206–7.

3.
AA, pp. 732–3.

4.
Murray 2000, pp. 206–7; MacEvitt 2008, pp. 122–3.

5.
WT Cont., pp. 67 and 77–8; Pringle I, pp. 286–95; Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 284–5.

6.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 181 and 183–5 for diagrams; Ellenblum 1996b, p. 528.

7.
Fulton 2015, pp. 56–61; Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 222–5 and 281–6.

8.
Fulton 2015, pp. 51–2; Basista 2007, pp. 33–55.

9.
Fulton 2015, p. 66.

10.
Fulton 2015, pp. 66–7.

11.
Fulton 2015, p. 66; Rogers 1992, pp. 247–8.

12.
Rogers 1992, pp. 243–7.

13.
Rogers 1992, p. 41.

14.
Rogers 1992, p. 49–51.

15.
WT I, p. 357; Caffaro 2013, pp. 115–16.

16.
Rogers 1992, p. 72–4; Prawer 1988, pp. 35–40; AA, pp. 514–18.

17.
WT II, pp. 108–9; Fulton 2015, p. 72; Qal., pp. 260–1; Rogers 1992, pp. 249–50.

18.
Qal., pp. 170–2; IA I, pp. 251–3.

19.
FC, pp. 238–9; Riley-Smith 1986b, pp. 337–50.

20.
FC, p. 270; WT I, pp. 550–6; Barber 2012, pp. 140–1.

21.
WT II, p. 10.

22.
WT II, p. 10.

23.
WT II, p. 10.

24.
'The First and Second Crusades from an anonymous Syriac chronicle' (1933), p. 95.

25.

WT II, p. 10.
26.
WT II, p. 11.
27.
WT II, p. 15.

28.
WT II, pp. 15–16; Ellenblum 2007b, p. 210; 'The First and Second Crusades from an anonymous Syriac chronicle' (1933), p. 95.
29.
WT II, pp. 10–11.
30.
WT II, p. 11–12.
31.
WT II, p. 15.
32.
WT II, p. 13.
33.
WT II, p. 13.
34.
WT II, pp. 14–15.
35.
WT II, p. 14; Rogers 1992, pp. 82–3.
36.
Raphael 2010, for instance.
37.
See, for example, Forey 1984b, pp. 13–23.
38.
BD, p. 203; Khamisy 2015, p. 76; Prouteau 2008, pp. 105–18.
39.
Khamisy 2015, pp. 89–92.
40.
Usama, p. 85.
41.
Usama, pp. 85–6.
42.
Usama, p. 86.
43.
Usama, p. 86.
44.
Qal., pp. 215–18.
45.
Qal., pp. 332–5.
46.
Pringle II, pp. 351–3; L&J, p. 257; BD, p. 73; IA II, pp. 320–1.
47.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 203–4.
48.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 166–70 and 306–17.
49.
Boas 2007, p. 79.
50.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 105–45; Pringle 2013a, pp. 227–39.

51.
Smail 1956, pp. 204–15; Ellenblum 2002, pp. 105–19.
52.
Qal., pp. 81–2; AA, pp. 744–9; Pringle Sec., pp. 105–6.
53.
AA, pp. 856–9.
54.
WT I, pp. 506–7; Barber 2012, pp. 104–5; Pringle I, pp. 304–14.
55.
Pringle I, pp. 274–5; Pringle 2005, pp. 333–53; Barber 2012, p. 105.
56.
Barber 2012, pp. 163–4.
57.
Murray 2000, pp. 229–30.
58.
AA, pp. 768–71; IA I, p. 142; Murray 2000, pp. 201–2.
59.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 167–9; Pringle I, p. 93; Pringle II, pp. 351–6.
60.
Pringle II, pp. 206–9; Ibn al-Furat II, p. 88; *RRH* nos 447 and 465.
61.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 146–64.
62.
Pringle 1986, pp. 5–77; Tibble 1989, pp. 99–152.
63.
Boas 2007, pp. 79–82.
64.
Talmon-Heller 2003, pp. 111–54; Talmon-Heller 1998, pp. 111–16.
65.
Tibble 1989, pp. 99–152; Pringle 1986, pp. 12–15.
66.
Tibble 1989, pp. 100–1.
67.
Kennedy 1994, pp. 12 and 30.
68.
Pringle 1986, pp. 73–5; Pringle Sec., pp. 104–5.
69.
AA, pp. 732–3; Pringle Sec., pp. 106–7; Kennedy 1994, p. 31; Barber 2012, pp. 162–3.
70.
WT II, p. 58; Benvenisti 1970, pp. 313–16.
71.
Barber 2012 p.162; Eracles in *RHCr Occid.* I, p. 617.
72.
WT II, p. 81.
73.
WT II, p. 81; Boas 2007, pp. 84–5.
74.
WT II, p. 81.
75.
Usama, p. 92; WT II, p. 82; Riley-Smith 2012, p. 29.
76.
WT II, p. 130; Pringle Sec., p. 109; Pringle II, pp. 378–84; Benvenisti 1970, p.

207.
77.
RRH no. 333 / *RRRH* no. 619; WT II, pp. 130–1.
78.
WT II, p. 131.
79.
WT II, p. 132; Pringle Sec., p. 93.
80.
WT II, p. 132.
81.
WT II, p. 132.
82.
WT II, p. 132.
83.
Pringle I, pp. 95–101; Pringle IV, pp. 250–6.
84.
Asbridge 2003, pp. 29–47.
85.
Qal., p. 216–17.
86.
Qal., p. 218; WT II, p. 74; IA I, p. 299.
87.
WT II, p. 107; Barber 2012, pp. 164–5.
88.
WT II, p. 108.

89.
Qal., p. 260–1; IA I, pp. 352–3.
90.
WT II, p. 256.
91.
Qal., p. 330–2; WT II, p. 257.
92.
Qal., p. 332; WT II, pp. 257–8.
93.
WT II, p. 259; Qal., pp. 334–5.
94.
Qal., pp. 336–7; Barber 2012, pp. 210–11; WT II, pp. 259–62.
95.
Riley-Smith 2012, pp. 32–3; Tibble 1989, pp. 13–23 and 71–2; *RRH* no. 325 / *RRRH* no. 603.
96.
IA II, p. 149.
97.
WT II, p. 309.
98.
WT II, p. 310.
99.
WT II, p. 310; Barber, M. and K. Bate tr., *Letters from the East*, 2010, pp. 60–2.
100.
Tibble 1989, pp. 150–2 and 165–8.
101.
Piana 2014, pp. 168–9; Piana 2016, pp. 443–8.

102.
Pringle Sec., pp. 152–3.
103.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 245–7.
104.
Ellenblum 2007b, p. 246; Pringle II, pp. 206–7.
105.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 239–40.
106.
Raphael 2010, p. 148.
107.
Raphael 2010, pp. 146–59; Ellenblum 2007b, p. 239.
108.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 240–2; Pringle Sec., pp. 6–9; Pringle 1986, pp. 15–22.
109.
Ellenblum 2007b, p. 247; Pringle Sec., pp. 7–9.
110.
Piana 2016, pp. 446–7.
111.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 250–1.
112.
See, for example, the case of Banyas in WT II, p. 258.
113.
Kennedy 1994, p. 61; Ellenblum 2007b, p. 251.
114.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 249–50; Pringle 1986, pp. 15–22.
115.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 249–50; Kennedy 1994, p. 117.
116.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 242–5 and p. 253.
117.
Ellenblum 2007b, p. 253.
118.
Pringle II, p. 305; WT Cont., p. 67.
119.
Ellenblum 2007b, p. 255–7.
120.
Boas 2007, pp. 86–9; Pringle Sec., p. 96; Pringle II, p. 332.
121.
Theoderic in *Jerusalem Pilgrimage, 1099–1185*, ed. J. Wilkinson 1988, p. 308.
122.
Boas 2007, p. 91.
123.
Hillenbrand 2001, p. 121.
124.
Hillenbrand 2001, p. 112.
125.
Qal., p. 266.
126.
WT II, p. 141.
127.
WT II, p. 142.
128.

Barber 2012, p. 179.
129.
Ellenblum 2007b, pp. 225–6; Kennedy 1994, pp. 96 and 114.
130.
Qal., p. 268; Barber 2012, p. 180.
131.
WT II, p. 210.
132.
Barber 2012, pp. 86–9.
133.
Barber 2012, p. 165.
134.
Riley-Smith 2012, pp. 29–30; *RRH* no. 212 / *RRRH* no. 414.
135.
Qal., pp. 287–8; IA II, pp. 22–3; Kennedy 1994, pp. 68–73.
136.
Kennedy 1994, pp. 68–71.
137.
Qal., p. 312; Piana 2014, pp. 135–7.
138.
RRRH no. 601; Riley-Smith 1969, pp. 278–88.
139.
Piana 2014, pp. 135–7.
140.
IA II, p. 165.
141.
IA II, p. 166.
142.
Hamilton 2000, p. 77; Pringle Sec., pp. 79–80; Tibble 1989, pp. 13–23.
143.
Tibble 1989, pp. 111–12 and 119–20.

8 War with Egyptians

1.
Particularly useful work on the Fatimid army of this period includes William Hamblin's unpublished PhD thesis *The Fatimid Army during the Early Crusades* (1985); Yaakov Lev 1991 and 1997; M. Brett 1995 and 2017; and David Nicolle 1996b, 1999 and 2007.
2.
Brett 1995, pp. 21–4 and 32–3.

3.
Kennedy 2007, pp. 148 and 159.
4.
Kennedy 2007, pp. 162–3.
5.
Kennedy 2007, p. 165.
6.
Smail 1956, pp. 83–7.
7.
Morton 2016, p. 148.
8.

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104.
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45.
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59.
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WC, p. 122.
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97.
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104.
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107.
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114.
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118.
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121.
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129.
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10 War with Saladin

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Any study of Saladin's campaigns benefits greatly from Eddé's *Saladin*, 2011, which analyses his rule from both a narrative and thematic perspective. M.C. Lyons and D.E.P. Jackson's *Saladin*, 1982 (referred to elsewhere as L&J), also provides a great deal of helpful detail, drawing particularly on his correspondence and that of his advisers.
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Gibb 1962, pp. 78–80.
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29.
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WT II, p. 428.
37.
WT II, p. 428; Pringle II, p. 12; IA II, p. 253.
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WT II, p. 427; Hamilton 1998, p. 122.
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46.
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51.
WT II, p. 427–8; Pringle II, pp. 12 and 181–99.
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56.
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59.
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86.
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104.
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106.
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110.
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111.
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161.
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11 Endgame

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3.
IA I, p. 303; Qal., p. 215.
4.
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5.
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towers (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), (ix), (x), (xi), (xii), (xiii), (xiv), (xv), (xvi)
Tower of David, citadel of Jerusalem (i)
Transjordan (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), (ix), (x)
trebuchets (i), (ii)n1, *see also* artillery; catapults
Tripoli, city (i)
Tripoli, county of (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), (ix), (x), (xi), (xii), (xiii), (xiv), (xv), (xvi), (xvii), (xviii), (xix), (xx), (xxi), (xxii), (xxiii), (xxiv), (xxv), (xxvi), (xxvii), (xxviii), (xxix), (xxx), (xxxi)
True Cross (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), (ix), (x), (xi), (xii), (xiii), (xiv), (xv), (xvi), (xvii)
Tubania, springs (i)
Tughtigin, Zahir al-Din, atabeg of Damascus (1104–28) (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi)
Turan (i), (ii)
Turcomans, Turkmen (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii)
Turcopoles (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), (ix), (x), (xi), (xii), (xiii), (xiv), (xv), (xvi), (xvii), (xviii), (xix), (xx), (xxi), (xxii), (xxiii), (xxiv), (xxv), (xxvi), (xxvii), (xxviii), (xxix), (xxx), (xxxi), (xxxii)n17, (xxxiii)n57
Turcopolier, officer of Turcopoles (i), (ii), (iii), (iv)
Turks, Turkic (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), (ix), (x), (xi), (xii), (xiii), (xiv), (xv), (xvi), (xvii), (xviii), (xix), (xx), (xxi), (xxii), (xxiii), (xxiv), (xxv), (xxvi), (xxvii), (xxviii), (xxix), (xxx), (xxxi), (xxxii), (xxxiii), (xxxiv), (xxxv), (xxxvi), (xxxvii), (xxxviii), (xxxix), (xl), (xli), (xlii), (xliii), (xliv), (xlv), (xlvi), (xlvii), (xlviii), (xlix), (l), (li), (lii), (liii), (liv), (lv), (lvi), (lvii), (lviii), (lix), (lx), (lxi), (lxii), (lxiii), (lxiv), (lxv)n6, *see also* Danishmend Turks; Seljuk Turks
Tyre (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), (ix), (x), (xi), (xii), (xiii), (xiv)

Usama ibn Munqidh (d. 1188) (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), (ix), (x), (xi), (xii), (xiii)

vaults (i)
Venice, Venetians (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi)
Verdun, county (i)
walls (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), (ix), (x), (xi), (xii), (xiii), (xiv), (xv),

(xvi), (xvii), (xviii), (xix), (xx), *see also* concentric
Walter, chancellor of Antioch (*c*. 1114–*c*. 1122), chronicler (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), (ix), (x)
Walter Scott (i)
William, knight at first battle of Ramla (1101) (i)
William of Bures, prince of Galilee (1112–42), constable of Jerusalem (1123–42), *custos* of Jerusalem (1123–4) (i), (ii), (iii)
William du Bois (i)
William I, king of England (1066–87) (i)
William-Jordan, count of Cerdagne, count of Tripoli (1105–9) (i), (ii)
William of Messines, patriarch of Jerusalem (1130–45) (i)
William II, archbishop of Tyre (1175–*c*. 1186), chancellor of Jerusalem, chronicler (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), (ix), (x), (xi), (xii), (xiii), (xiv), (xv), (xvi), (xvii), (xviii), (xix), (xx), (xxi), (xxii)

Yemen (i), (ii), (iii), (iv)

Zacharias, castellan of Marqab (i)
Zardana (i), (ii), (iii), (iv)
Zengi, ʻImad al-Din, atabeg of Mosul (1127–46) (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), (ix), (x), (xi), (xii), (xiii), (xiv)
Zengids (i)